India TB Report 2024

Source: IE

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the **India TB Report 2024**, which highlights that the mortality rate due to **Tuberculosis (TB)** had declined from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 23 per lakh population in 2022.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Trends in TB Cases and Deaths:**
  - The majority of the TB cases are still reported by the government health centres, even as there has been an uptick in notifications by the private sector.
    - Nearly 33% or 8.4 lakh of the 25.5 lakh cases reported in 2023 came from the private sector.
    - To compare, only **1.9 lakh cases were reported by the private sector** in 2015, the year considered to be the baseline by the programme that is geared towards the elimination of the disease.
  - The estimated incidence of **TB in 2023 increased slightly to 27.8 lakh from the previous year's estimate of 27.4 lakh.**
    - The mortality due to the infection remained **the same at 3.2 lakh.**
  - India's **TB mortality dropped** from 4.94 lakhs in 2021 to 3.31 lakhs in 2022.
  - India reached its **2023 target of initiating treatment in 95%** of patients diagnosed with the infection.

TB CASES IN INDIA OVER THE YEARS

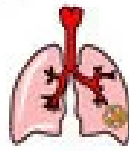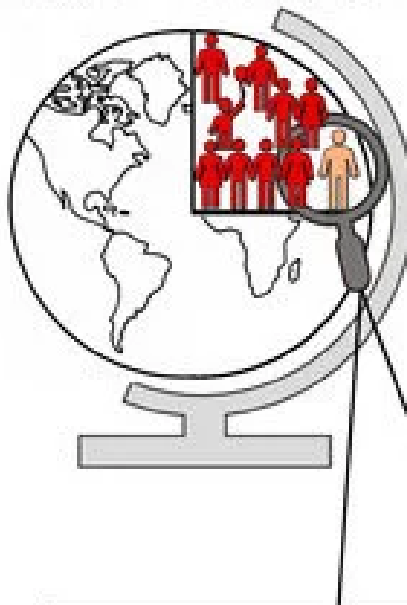|	India TB Report 2020	2023	2024
Estimated TB cases	26.9 lakh	27.4 lakh	27.8 lakh
Number of cases reported	24.04 lakh	24.2 lakh	25.5 lakh
Reporting from private sector	6.8 lakh	7.3 lakh	8.4 lakh
% cases from private sector	28.20%	30%	32.90%
Estimated mortality	4.36 lakh	3.2 lakh	3.2 lakh

- **Challenges in Meeting Targets:**
  - Despite setting **ambitious goals to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025**, India has faced

challenges in meeting these targets.

- The **number of cases and deaths recorded in 2023 fell short** of the targets set by the country.
- There **are various risk factors** that contribute to the incidence and treatment outcomes of tuberculosis.
    - These include <u>Undernourishment</u>**, HIV,** <u>Diabetes</u>**, Alcohol Use, and smoking.**
- **Undernourishment:**
    - Nearly **7.44 lakh TB patients were undernourished in 2022.** To improve nutrition, the government provides **monthly support of Rs 500 to nearly one crore beneficiaries.**
        - Other than that, the **Ni-kshay Mitra programme** calls for the donation of food baskets.
- **HIV:**
    - **People living with HIV have a 20-times higher risk of developing symptoms of TB** as compared to the normal population. Altogether 94,000 TB patients in 2022 had HIV.
- **Diabetes:**
    - Of the 3.70 lakh TB patients with diabetes globally in 2022**, 1.02 lakh were in India as per estimates.**
    - Diabetes escalates the likelihood of contracting **TB two-to-threefold,** which in turn is linked to increased risk of **Multi-Drug Resistant TB.**
    - The TB treatment also does not work as well in diabetics. **Nearly 92% of TB patients were screened for diabetes in 2023**, with 7.7% being diagnosed with it. And, nearly 63% of those diagnosed initiated diabetes treatment as per the report.
- **Alcohol and Tobacco Use:**
    - A **daily intake of more than 50 ml of alcohol increases the risk of TB** infection, active infection and recurrence of infection.
        - Around 18.8 lakh or **74% of TB patients underwent alcohol use screening,** out of which 7.1% were identified as alcohol users.
    - In 2023, around 19.1 lakh or **75% of TB patients were screened for tobacco use,** of whom 11% were identified as tobacco users.
        - And 32% of these people were linked to tobacco cessation services.

What is Tuberculosis?

- **About:**
    - Tuberculosis is a **bacterial infection caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis**. It can practically affect any organ of the body. The most common ones are the lungs, pleura (lining around the lungs), lymph nodes, intestines, spine, and brain.
- **Transmission:**
    - It is an **airborne infection** that spreads through close contact with the infected, especially in densely populated spaces with poor ventilation.
- **Symptoms:**
    - Common symptoms of active lung TB are cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Infection Prevalence:**
    - Every year, 10 million people fall ill with TB. Despite being a preventable and curable disease, **1.5 million people die from TB each year** – making it the world's top infectious killer.
    - TB is the **leading cause of death of people with HIV** and also a major contributor to antimicrobial resistance.
    - Most of the people who fall ill with TB live in low- and middle-income countries, but TB is present all over the world. **About half of all people with TB can be found in 8 countries:** Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines and South Africa.
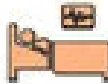
Global TB statistics

2 billion people harbour a dormant form of *M. tb* infection worldwide

5 – 10% of latently infected individuals are predisposed to developing active TB in their lifespan

HIV co-infection increases the risk of TB reactivation by 18 times

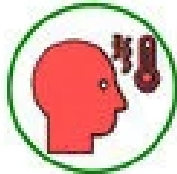around 10 million people fall ill with TB every year at least since 2000

> 1 million people succumb to death from TB every year at least since 2000
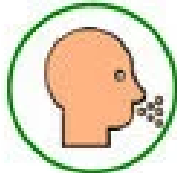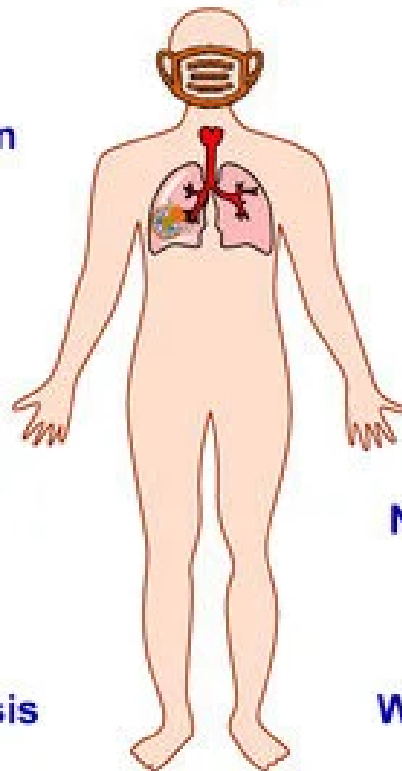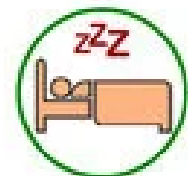
Active TB symptoms

Chest pain

Fever

Persistent cough

Hemoptysis

Fatigue

Loss of appetite

Night sweat

Weight loss

- **Treatment:**
  - TB is treated with a standard 6-month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
  - **Anti-TB medicines have been used for decades** and strains that are resistant to 1 or more of the medicines have been documented in every country surveyed.
    - **Multidrug-resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by **bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin**, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs.
      - MDR-TB is treatable and **curable by using second-line drugs** such as

bedaquiline.
- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that **do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs,** often leaving patients without any further treatment options.
- **Drugs for TB:**
    - **Isoniazid (INH):** This drug is a cornerstone of TB treatment and is highly effective against **Mycobacterium tuberculosis.**
        - It works by inhibiting the synthesis of mycolic acids in the bacterial cell wall.
    - **Rifampicin (RIF):** Another essential drug in **TB treatment, rifampicin** works by inhibiting the synthesis of RNA in the bacteria.
        - It is often used in **combination with other drugs to treat TB** and is crucial for preventing the development of drug resistance.
    - **Delamanid:** Delamanid is a newer drug that is used in the treatment of **multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)** and is often **used in combination with other drugs.**

What are Different Initiatives to Combat TB?

- **Global Efforts:**
    - The **WHO (World Health Organisation)** has launched a joint initiative **"Find. Treat. All. #EndTB"** with the Global Fund **and** Stop TB Partnership.
        - WHO also releases the **Global Tuberculosis Report.**
    - **The Global Plan to End TB, 2023-2030:** It is a plan for ending TB as a public health challenge by 2030. It provides a blueprint of priority actions required and a detailed estimate of the financial resources needed to end TB.
        - It is a goal that has been adopted by all Member States of the **United Nations (UN)** and the WHO.
        - The **End TB Strategy** builds on and significantly expands the scope of efforts in the context of the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goal 3.3.**
- **India's Efforts:**
    - **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan**
    - **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025)**
    - **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign**
    - **Nikshay Poshan Yojna**
    - **RePORT India:** RePORT India **(Regional Prospective Observational Research for Tuberculosis (TB))** is a bilateral, multi-organizational, collaborative effort established in 2013 under the **Indo-US Vaccine Action Program (VAP).**
        - It aims to address the **threat of TB to the people of India and across the globe.**

Conclusion

- The path to TB elimination in India requires a concerted effort to prioritise person-centred care, address social determinants of health, and embrace innovation. By adopting a holistic and person-centred approach, India can overcome the barriers that stand in the way of TB control and create a healthier future for all its citizens.

Mains Question:

Q: Analyse the challenges hindering the progress towards eliminating TB in India. In light of the identified challenges propose strategies to overcome the barriers to achieving TB elimination.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Internet Freedom

Source: TH

Why in News?

For five straight years, India has topped the global list of countries imposing internet bans, with about 60% of all blackouts recorded in **the world, between 2016 and 2022** having been in India.

- State imposed shutdowns in the last decade have cited national security and threats to public order. However, rights groups have argued that these shutdowns also violate court directives.

What are the Key Trends of Internet Shutdown in India?

- **Instances of Internet Shutdown:**
    - The Indian government imposed a **total of 780 shutdowns between 1stJanuary, 2014, and 31st December, 2023**, according to data collected by the Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC).
    - Shutdowns flared up during the protests against the **Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019**, the abrogation of **Article 370 in 2019,** and the introduction of **Farm Bills in**

2020.
- Internet disruptions in India accounted for **more than 70% of the total loss to the global economy in 2020.**
- India shut down the internet for over 7,000 hours in 2023.
  - Regionally, Jammu and Kashmir saw the highest number of shutdowns — at 433 — in the last 12 years.
    - The longest blackout in 2023 took place in Manipur from May to December, amid ethnic clashes.
- Between 2015 and 2022, more than 55,000 websites were blocked, according to SFLC data.
  - The biggest share of content censored was done under **section 69A of the IT Act**, by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
  - URLs were blocked due to links to organizations banned under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.**
- **Global Internet Freedom:**
  - Global Internet freedom has declined for the 13th consecutive year, and the environment for human rights online has deteriorated in 29 countries, according to the latest Freedom House report.
    - India's ranking has hovered around the same benchmark in the last three years.
    - This is a dip from 2016 and 2017, when India scored 59 points, to 50 points in 2023.

What are the Provisions Related to Internet Shutdown?

- **Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, read with Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency and Public Safety) Rules, 2017:**
  - These rules allow the union or state home secretary to order the suspension of any telegraph service (including internet) in case of public emergency or public safety.
  - Such an order must be reviewed by a committee within five days and cannot last for more than 15 days. In an urgent situation, an officer of joint secretary level or **above, authorized by the union or state home secretary, can issue the order.**
    - However, the law does not define what qualifies as an emergency or safety issue. The Supreme Court, in the landmark Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India case, 2020 **reiterated** that internet shutdowns violate fundamental rights to freedom of expression and shutdowns lasting indefinitely are unconstitutional.
- **Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure:**
  - This section empowers a district magistrate, a sub-divisional magistrate or any other executive magistrate specially empowered by the state government to issue orders to prevent or stop any nuisance or disturbance of public tranquility.
  - Such orders can include the suspension of internet services in a particular area for a specified period.

What are the Arguments Regarding Internet Shutdown?

- **Prevents Hate Speech and Misinformation:**
  - Internet shutdowns can help to prevent the spread of **hate speech** and fake news that could incite violence and riots.
  - For example, the government announced the internet shutdown in Delhi NCR following the farmers' protest **on** Republic Day to combat misinformation and maintain law and order.
- **Prevents any Anti-National Activities:**
  - Internet shutdowns can help curb the organization and mobilization of protests that could disrupt public order and security.
  - For example, the government imposed **internet shutdowns in Kashmir** and other parts of the country after the abrogation of **Article 370** to prevent any anti-national activities and separatist movements.
- **Protects National Security:**
  - Internet shutdowns can help protect national security and sovereignty from external threats and **cyberattacks**.

- For example, the government suspended internet services in some border areas during the **standoff with China** to prevent any espionage or sabotage.
- **Curb on Objectionable Content from Consumption:**
    - Internet shutdowns can help control the distribution and consumption of content that could be harmful or offensive to certain groups or individuals.
    - For example, the **government blocks internet access in some regions** to prevent the circulation of objectionable images or videos.

What are the Concerns Related to Internet Shutdown?

- **Violation of Rights:**
    - Internet shutdowns violate Fundamental Rights under **Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g).**
        - The freedom of speech and expression and freedom to practice any profession over the medium of the internet enjoy constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g) - the Supreme Court in **Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India case (2020).**
    - Internet Shutdown also violates **Right to Information** which has been declared as a **Fundamental Right under** Article 19 by the Supreme Court in **Raj Narain vs State of UP (1975) case.**
    - Internet Shutdowns also violate the **Right to Internet** which was declared a Fundamental Right under Article 21 **by the Kerala High Court in** Faheema Shirin v. State of Kerala **case.**
- **Lack of Accountability:**
    - Shutdowns are **often implemented without clear legal frameworks** or oversight mechanisms, leading to arbitrary and disproportionate restrictions on internet access.
    - The absence of accountability mechanisms exacerbates the risk of abuse of power by authorities, who may impose shutdowns without adequate justification or recourse for affected individuals.
- **Economic Disruption:**
    - Beyond the immediate social and political implications, **internet shutdowns have significant economic repercussions**. Disruptions to online commerce, communication, and financial transactions disrupt business operations, hinder economic growth, and deter investment, ultimately undermining long-term development objectives.
        - According to Top10VPN, India lost Rs 2,091 crore ($255.2 million) in the first half of 2023 because of internet shutdowns.
- **Social Disruption:**
    - Shutdowns disrupt the fabric of society by impeding **communication networks, hindering access to vital services,** and isolating individuals from their communities. Social cohesion may suffer as a result, as people are unable to connect, organize, or mobilize effectively, leading to feelings of isolation and alienation.

Way Forward

- The Government authorities should follow the directions of the **Supreme Court in the Anuradha Bhasin case (2020).** The Supreme Court issued following guidelines:
    - Suspension can be utilized for a temporary duration only.
    - Any order suspending the internet issued under the Suspension Rules must adhere to the principle of proportionality and must not extend beyond the necessary duration.
    - Any order suspending the internet under the Suspension Rules is **subject to** judicial review.
- Strengthening the legal and regulatory framework that governs internet shutdowns, and ensuring that they are only **used as a last resort,** in accordance with international human rights standards.
    - The government should amend the **Telegraph Act and its rules**, which are outdated and vague, and do not comply with constitutional and human rights standards.
- The government should consider **other less intrusive measures to deal with law-and-order disturbances,** communal violence, terrorist attacks, examinations, and political instability, such as blocking specific websites or content, issuing warnings or advisories, engaging with civil society

and media, or deploying more security forces.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (2018)

(a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.

(b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.

(c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.

(d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.

Ans: (c)

Mains:

Q. What do you understand by the concept of "freedom of speech and expression"? Does it cover hate speech also? Why do the films in India stand on a slightly different plane from other forms of expression? Discuss. **(2014)**

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