

CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC CSE 2026



LECTURE - 2 (Social Justice & Governance)
CURRENT AFFAIRS (PRELIMS + MAINS)
[MAY + JUNE 2025]

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Education

In India, education without employment

Why in news: The government claims **education reforms** (Atal Tinkering Labs, coding in schools, SC/ST teacher recruitment, Muslim girl empowerment) will drive a **renaissance**.

Prelims and Mains context:

Employability & Structural Flaws

- NEP 2020 overlooks the **employability crisis** in a **changing job market**. Graduate employability (2025) is only **42.6%**, nearly the same as 2023 (44.3%).
- Degrees remain **disconnected from market needs**; students lack **meaningful employment**.
- NEP's **multiple entry/exit model** has mostly created **low-paying e-commerce jobs**.

Quality of Higher Education: Misleading Rankings

- Government cites **QS World Rankings success**: It is an **annual global ranking** of universities, evaluating over **1,500 institutions**.
 - In 2025, MIT retained **top spot**, and India had **54 universities ranked**, reflecting a **growing presence**.
 - It is published annually by **London-based** global higher education analytics firm **Quacquarelli Symonds**.
 - **Five Lenses with different weightage**: Research and Discovery, Employability and Outcomes, Global Engagement, Learning Experience, Sustainability. These lenses are further divided into **10 indicators**.
 - A new indicator named **International Student Diversity** has been added this year under **Global Engagement**.
- However, **India's CNCI (quality metric)** was 17th among 19 G-20 nations (2008–2019), rising only to **16th in 2024**.
- **CNCI (Category Normalized Citation Impact)** measures the **scientific impact of research publications**, normalized by **subject category** and publication year for fair comparison.
- A **CNCI score above 1** indicates **above-average citation performance** compared to the **global baseline** for similar research.
- Indian universities' rise in rankings **masks low publication and innovation quality**.

India's Innovation Standing

- **Global Innovation Index (GII)** ranks: 2014: 76, 2015: 81, 2024: 39. Malaysia (33) and Türkiye (37) are ahead. In **2025: 38th**.
 - It is published **annually by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**, a **UN specialized agency**.
 - GII has been developed in collaboration with **Cornell University and INSEAD** since its **inception in 2007**.
 - It is an **annual ranking of around 130–140 economies**, assessing **innovation capabilities and performance** using about **80 indicators** such as **institutions, human capital, infrastructure, market sophistication, and knowledge creation**.
 - GII provides insights into **innovation strengths and areas for improvement**, helping **policymakers foster innovation-driven growth**.
- Bengaluru's global S&T cluster rank: 56, compared to Silicon Valley at 6.

Global Standing and Research Ecosystem (**Positives**)

Do you know?

- **National Education Policy (NEP)** is a comprehensive framework for the development of education in India; the first need for such a policy was raised in **1964** by **MP Siddheshwar Prasad**.
- In response, a **17-member Education Commission** headed by **D S Kothari** was set up, leading to the first **NEP in 1968**.
- India has had **three NEPs**: **1968** (Indira Gandhi), **1986** (Rajiv Gandhi)—revised in **1992** (P V Narasimha Rao), and **2020** (Narendra Modi). **Use these points as solutions**
- **NEP 2020** proposes major reforms like:
 - Opening Indian higher education to **foreign universities**
 - Replacing UGC, AICTE with a new system
 - Introducing a **four-year multidisciplinary UG programme** with **multiple exit options**
 - Discontinuing the **MPhil programme**
 - Promoting **mother tongue/regional language** as medium of instruction till 5th
- **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)**: Launched in **2015**, outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.
 - **Conducted by**: Ministry of Education.
 - **Parameters**: Teaching, Learning and Resources; Research and Professional Practices; Graduation Outcomes; Outreach and Inclusivity; Perception.
- **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)**: Started from **2010-11**, covers parameters such as **teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, infrastructure**.
 - **Conducted by**: Ministry of Education.



Solutions

- Introduce a **flexible four-year degree** programme enabling students to **earn exit credentials** and rejoin later.
- Emphasis on **vocational education, industry internships**, and **practical exposure** for real-world competencies.
- **Research internships** bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs.
- Programmes like **Smart India Hackathon** (nationwide, non-stop product development competition organized by the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell (MIC) and AICTE to engage students in finding innovative solutions to real-world problems) with idea submissions growing **sevenfold since 2017**.

Release Samagra Shiksha scheme funds due to T.N., Stalin appeals to Centre

Why in news: Tamil Nadu CM urged the Centre to release pending ₹2,200 crore under the Samagra Shiksha scheme without unilateral conditions or delays. He emphasized that funds were withheld due to non-signing of PM-SHRI scheme MoU, affecting children's education and RTE Act implementation.

Prelims context:**About Samagra Shiksha scheme:**

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education.
- It is an **integrated centrally sponsored scheme** for **school education from pre-school to class XII**. Covers all government and aided schools.
- It subsumes Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, and Teacher Education initiatives.
- **Aims** for inclusive, equitable, and quality education; supports RTE Act and NEP 2020.
- Focuses on **foundational literacy, digital education, vocational training, teacher development, infrastructure**.

Do you know?

- PM SHRI (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India) is a **centrally sponsored scheme** launched in 2022 to upgrade 14,500 existing schools as model institutions aligned with NEP 2020.
- It focuses on **holistic student development, experiential and inquiry-based learning, competency-based assessments, and eco-friendly infrastructure**.
- The scheme targets **existing schools at the elementary, secondary, and senior secondary levels**, run by the central, state, and local governments.

Don't withhold State's RTE funds over NEP row, Madras HC tells Centre

Why in news: The Madras High Court directed the Union Ministry of Education to consider splitting fund disbursal to Tamil Nadu under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme (SSS) to release funds for RTE reimbursements.

Prelims and Mains context:

- RTE Act, 2009, creates an independent obligation on both Centre and State governments to fund free and compulsory education.
- Section 7 of the RTE Act provides for concurrent responsibility of Centre and States to fund provisions of the Act.
- The court held that RTE funds need not be linked to adoption of NEP 2020.

'More Rhodes scholarships for Indians from 2028'

Why in news: The Rhodes Scholarship Trust plans to increase the number of scholarships for Indians from 2028 to align with India's population strength.

Prelims context:

- Currently, six scholarships are offered annually to Indian candidates for studying at the University of Oxford.
- The trust also plans to increase scholarships for China and Africa, alongside India.

About Rhodes Scholarship:

- It is a **prestigious, fully-funded international postgraduate award** to study at the University of Oxford.
- It aims to develop **outstanding young leaders** with **intellect, character, and commitment to public service**, promoting **global understanding and peace**. The scholarship covers **tuition and living expenses for two or more years of study**, with the possibility of extension to a **third year**.

Chandigarh tops school education index, Meghalaya comes last: report

Why in news: Chandigarh was adjudged **best performer in school education** for 2023–24 as per the **Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0**. Meghalaya ranked lowest with a score of 417, falling into the **Akanshi-3** category.

Prelims and Mains context:

- The PGI 2.0 assesses States/UTs on **1,000 points** across indicators like **learning outcomes, access, infrastructure, equity, governance, and teacher education**.
- PGI was originally launched in 2017 and was revamped as PGI 2.0 in 2021 to align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- No State or UT reached the **highest score range of 761–1000 (Daksh)**, indicating **scope for improvement**.
- 24 States/UTs improved their scores in **2023–24**, while 12 States/UTs saw a **decline** from the previous year.
- Chandigarh** scored **719**, making it the only State in **Grade Prachesta-1 (701–760)**.
- Ten States/UTs — Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat, Odisha, Kerala, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan — fall under **Prachesta-3 (581–640)**.
- States like **Telangana, Assam, Jharkhand, Tripura, Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh** are in **Akanshi-2 (461–520)**.
- Middle-ranking States/UTs (Akanshi-1: 521–580) include **Puducherry, Himachal Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, West Bengal, MP, Sikkim, UP, J&K, Uttarakhand, Ladakh**.
- Bihar and Telangana recorded the **highest improvement in access** to school education.
- Delhi, J&K, and Telangana made the **highest progress in infrastructure** between **2022–23 and 2023–24**.

Language of unity

Why in news: National Education Policy 2020 mandates that all students must learn **three languages** in school.

Prelims and Mains context:

- NEP 2020 is theoretically **more flexible** than earlier versions of the three-language policy.
- States can choose **any two Indian languages** and **one foreign language** in the three-language formula.
- There is fear that **Hindi may become default second Indian language**, raising concerns of language imposition.
- Three-language formula was first introduced in NEP of 1968**. This policy and Official Language Resolution, 1968 mandated the teaching of Hindi as a language in non-Hindi speaking States.
- NEP, 2020 has retained three-language formula albeit with a difference that it **doesn't impose any language**. It specifies that the languages to be learnt will be the **choice of States, regions and the students**, so long as at least **two of the three languages are native to India**.
- The policy also emphasises **bilingual teaching**, particularly in the home language/mother tongue and English. It places significant emphasis on **Sanskrit** as an optional choice within the three-language formula. In **2019**, backlash led **Kasturirangan Committee** to remove the mandatory Hindi learning clause from the draft NEP.

AI-based education drive improves results in Rajasthan schools

Why in news: "Padhai with AI", an **artificial intelligence (AI)-based initiative**, was launched to help students in **difficult subjects** in **Rajasthan's Tonk district**.

Prelims context:

- The initiative especially helped students struggling with **mathematics**, enabling them to **solve textbook questions** and **practice similar new questions**.

JNU suspends MoU with Turkiye varsity

Why in news: Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has **suspended its MoU with Inonu University, Turkiye**, citing **national security considerations**. The agreement included **plans for student and faculty exchange programmes**. Inonu University is located in **Malatya, Turkiye**. JNU currently has MoUs with **78 universities worldwide**.

World's Best School Prize 2025

Why in news: A Zilla Parishad (ZP) school in Jalindarnagar village, Pune district, has been shortlisted among global finalists for the **World's Best School Prize 2025** in the category of **Community Collaboration in education**.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Three other Indian schools** — one each from **Karnataka, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh** — have also been shortlisted under **various categories** for the award.
- The award is organised by **UK-based international education platform T4 Education**.
- One of the school's **innovative approaches** is the '**Vishay Mitra**' (subject friend) initiative. It is a **peer-learning model** where senior students mentor juniors, helping clarify doubts in a **comfortable, student-led setting**.

About World's Best School Prize 2025:

- The **World's Best School Prizes 2025** are **global awards** recognizing **exceptional schools** contributing to **education and their communities**. The awards cover **five categories: Community Collaboration, Environmental Action, Innovation, Overcoming Adversity, and Supporting Healthy Lives**.
- Winners are announced in **October 2025**, and **finalists** are invited to the **World Schools Summit in Abu Dhabi**.

Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2024

Why in News: UNESCO released the **Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2024**, mandated by the '**Education 2030 Incheon Declaration & Framework for Action**' for monitoring **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** and its linkages with other SDGs.

Prelims and Mains context:

Key Findings:

- **Disruption of Education Systems:** In the past **20 years**, schools were closed in at least **75% of extreme weather events**, affecting **5 million+ people**.
- **India-related Findings:**
 - **Rainfall shocks** in early life reduced **vocabulary at age 5** and **mathematics & non-cognitive skills at age 15**.
 - **Fast progress:** Reducing **out-of-school rate (primary children)**.
 - **Slow progress:** Reducing **out-of-school rate (lower secondary)** and **gender gap in completion rate (upper secondary)**.
- **Education's Role in Climate Change:**
 - Education's potential in **combating climate change** is **under-recognized** in global agendas.
 - **SDG 4** was addressed in only **2 of 72 transnational climate initiatives**.

Mizoram achieves full functional literacy

Why in news: **Mizoram** officially declared a **fully literate state**, becoming the **first state in India to achieve full functional literacy**.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Mizoram recorded **98.20% literacy rate** as per the **PLFS Survey 2023–24** (above 95% benchmark).
- In **2024**, **Ladakh** became the **first administrative unit** to declare full functional literacy.
- **Goa** has become the **second state** to achieve **full functional literacy**.
- **Ministry of Education** considers **above 95% literacy rate = Full literacy**.
- Achievements due to implementation of **ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram** (centrally sponsored scheme by the Indian government (2022–2027) to promote lifelong learning and functional literacy among adults aged 15 and above who have missed formal schooling).
- Kerala declared **full literacy in 1991** under **National Literacy Mission** (>90% literacy rate). Kerala is not fully functionally literate but achieved the status of India's first fully digitally literate state in August 2025.
- **Literacy:** Person aged **7+ years** who can **read & write with understanding** in a language.
- **Functional Literacy:** Ability to **read, write, comprehend and apply information in daily life**. Includes tasks like reading instructions, filling forms, using technology, making informed decisions.

ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram (New India Literacy Programme, NILP):

- **Defined Literates:** Learners who can **read, write, do basic math**, and have **digital & financial literacy**.
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme aligned with NEP 2020.
- **Target:** **5 crore learners** (1 crore learners per year) via **Online Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (OTLAS)**.
- **OTLAS:** A computer application embedded in the **Web Portal/Mobile App** under ULLAS, developed by NIC.
- **Duration:** FY 2022–23 to 2026–27. **Ministry:** Ministry of Education.
- **Target Group:** Adults aged **15+** who missed **formal schooling**.
- **Components:** Foundational Literacy & Numeracy, Critical Life Skills (financial literacy, digital literacy), Basic Education, Vocational Skills, Continuing Education.
- **Implementation:** Through **volunteerism**, promoting '**Kartavya Bodh**' (social responsibility & duty).
- **Regional Languages:** Access via **DIKSHA Portal** and **ULLAS Mobile App/Portal**.
- **Assessment & Certification:** **FLNAT (Foundational Literacy & Numeracy Assessment Test)** conducted twice a year/on demand at local schools.

Vulnerable Sections

Govt. to bring new national policy on senior citizens

Why in news: A new national policy on senior citizens is in the **draft stage** with the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**. The draft policy aims to "reflect the demographic realities" of India as it moves into the future.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Population projections estimate that **20% of India's population will be senior citizens by 2047**.
- According to the **2011 Census**, senior citizens made up **8.23%** of the population.
- **By 2026**, senior citizens are projected to form **12.16%** of the population.
- There were deliberations on establishing a **grievance redress mechanism** to address **elder abuse and neglect**.

Use as solutions

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- Discussions included implementing minimum standards for old age homes and senior care institutions.
- Emphasis was laid on promoting community engagement and intergenerational bonding.
- A detailed review was undertaken of **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)** and **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSRc)**. The government said over 5 lakh senior citizens had received free assisted living devices under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana.
 - **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)**, launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, provides free assistive devices like walking sticks, hearing aids, wheelchairs, and dentures to senior citizens (60+ years) in the BPL category with age-related disabilities. RVY is implemented by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) and funded by the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund.
 - **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSRc)** is a Central Sector Scheme by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, aiming to improve the quality of life of indigent senior citizens. IPSRc provides basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care, and entertainment, and supports capacity building of government bodies, NGOs, and local institutions.

WHO Report on Social Connection

Why in News: The WHO released a report titled 'From Loneliness to Social Connection: Charting a Path to Healthier Societies', highlighting the impact of social isolation and loneliness on health, well-being, and society.

Mains context:

What is Social Connection and Disconnection?

- **Social Connection:** Ways we relate & interact with others (family, friends, classmates, coworkers, neighbours).
- **Social Disconnection:** When a person lacks enough social contact, doesn't feel supported, or has strained/negative relationships.
 - **Loneliness:** Gap between desired vs actual connection.
 - **Social Isolation:** Having very few relationships or not meeting people often.

Key Highlights of Report:

- **Widespread Social Disconnection:** 1 in 6 people feel lonely (2014–2023). Young people (13–29 years) are the loneliest group. 1 in 3 older adults (1990–2022) and 1 in 4 teenagers (2003–2018) are socially isolated.
- **Disparities:** Low-income countries – about 24% lonely. High-income countries – about 11% lonely.

Violent crimes by juveniles have increased in India

Mains context:

- **Violent crimes:** rape, murder, bodily injury, attempted murder, arson, dacoity, robbery. **Non-violent crimes:** rash driving, causing death by negligence, forgery, cheating, trespassing, fraud, pickpocketing, thefts, obscene acts.
- **U.K.:** share of juveniles apprehended for violent crimes rose from 50% to 57%. Similar patterns observed in India.

Trend in India (2017–2022)

- Juveniles in conflict with law declined from 37,402 (2017) to 33,261 (2022).
- Share of violent offences increased: 2016: 32.5%; 2022: 49.5%.
- Madhya Pradesh: 21.8%, Maharashtra: 18%, Rajasthan: 9.6%.
- **Proportion of Violent Crimes within States (2017–2022):** Jharkhand: 67%, Tripura, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh: over 60%, Odisha: 10%.
- **Central and eastern States** are hotspots for violent juvenile crimes, with **Madhya Pradesh most affected**.

HEALTH

Nutrition

Sprouting sustainable, nutrition-sensitive food systems

Why in news: Despite being a major producer of milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and livestock, India faces dual nutrition issues: **Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies** and Rising **overnutrition and obesity**.

Prelims and Mains context:

- India ranks 105 out of 127 in the **Global Hunger Index 2024**.
 - The **Global Hunger Index (GHI)** is an annual, peer-reviewed report by **Concern Worldwide** and **Welthungerhilfe** that tracks hunger globally, regionally, and nationally.
 - GHI uses four indicators: **undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality**.
 - The **GHI score ranges from 0 (no hunger) to 100 (worst hunger)**, with severity levels from low to alarming.

- NFHS-5 (2019–21) data highlights: 35.5% stunted, 32.1% underweight, 19.3% wasted among under-5 children. 57% of reproductive-age women are anaemic. 24% women and 22.9% men are overweight/obese.
 - **Stunted:** A child with low height for age due to chronic malnutrition, reflecting long-term insufficient nutrition and repeated infections, leading to impaired physical and cognitive development.
 - **Wasted:** A child with low weight for height caused by acute malnutrition from recent food shortages or illness, indicating rapid deterioration in nutritional status and high mortality risk if untreated.

Reasons

- Globally, food system failures cost \$12 trillion annually (health, nutrition, environment).
- In India, climate change and rapid population growth add to vulnerabilities.
- 55.6% of Indians can't afford a nutritious diet.
- Food insecurity now includes: Hunger, micronutrient deficiency, and diet-related NCDs.
- Structural flaws in food systems and climate change are worsening crop yields and livelihoods of farmers.
- Consequences: Lower human capital, higher healthcare costs, and reduced productivity.

Key Strategies for Transformation

- Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture: Promote biofortified, climate-resilient crops, crop diversity. Improve post-harvest storage systems. Adopt models like Nutrition-Sensitive Community Planning (NSCP) focusing on soil, water, WASH, and health. School-Based Nutrition: Nutri-Pathshala integrates biofortified grains in meals.
- Encourage local sourcing from farmers.
- Strengthen Social Safety Nets: Enhance PDS and mid-day meals with indigenous, nutrient-rich foods.
- Private Sector Role: Shift focus from volume to nutrition-centric food production. Introduce clearer labelling, digital tools (QR codes). Innovate in fortification, plant-based alternatives, nutrient-dense products.
- Address Climate & Economic Vulnerabilities: Promote climate-smart agriculture. Expand rural economic opportunities and adopt gender-sensitive policies.
- Awareness Campaigns: Use tools like 'MyPlate Blast Off' games, radio programmes to spread awareness.

Do you know?

- In 1971, V N Dandekar and N Rath defined the poverty line based on 2,250 calories/day, setting it at Rs 15 (rural) and Rs 22.5 (urban) using 1960–61 NSS data.
- In 1979, the Y K Alagh Task Force revised it to 2,400 calories (rural) and 2,100 calories (urban), which became official until the 1990s.
- In 1993, Lakdawala Committee introduced state-specific poverty lines adjusted for regional prices.
- In 2009, the Tendulkar Committee set the 2004–05 poverty line at Rs 446.68 (rural) and Rs 578.80 (urban) per capita per month, moving away from calorie-based norms.

SAHAYOG Initiative:

- Launched by: Odisha government.
- Aim: improve living standards of the economically backward through government schemes.
- Objective: identify eligible beneficiaries in urban poor communities & connect them to schemes via mass awareness, doorstep delivery.

Urbanization & Urban Poverty in India

- Urban population: grew from 17.29% (1951) → 31.16% (2011).
- UN projection: over 50% of India's population will live in cities by 2050.

Combating obesity among adolescents

Why in news: The seventh Poshan Pakhwada and the 'Let's Fix Our Food' consortium have brought adolescent obesity into sharp focus. The Supreme Court has mandated the Central government to finalise transparent food labelling regulations within three months, indicating heightened urgency.

Prelims and Mains context:

India's Nutrition Paradox

- Adolescents face dual burdens: persistent undernutrition and a rising obesity epidemic linked to ultra-processed, high-sugar, high-fat diets. Poor nutrition impacts not only physical health but also mental well-being, academic performance, and productivity.
- The World Obesity Atlas 2024 notes that India has one of the fastest-growing childhood obesity rates globally.
- Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey shows 5%–15% of adolescents in some States are overweight.

Two-Pronged Strategy: Regulation + Youth Engagement

- Policy reforms must: Introduce health taxes on high-fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) items, Provide subsidies on nutrient-dense foods, Mandate front-of-pack nutrition labels and Regulate child-targeted advertisements, especially on digital platforms and in schools.

- Schools and communities** should promote: Nutrition education, Physical activity, Food literacy to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy food, read labels, and value locally grown, diverse diets.

Need for Inter-Ministerial Coordination

- Nutrition is spread across multiple ministries – **WCD, Health, Agriculture, Industry, Education, Consumer Affairs**. Current efforts are **fragmented** without **institutionalised convergence**.
- Platforms like **Poshan Abhiyaan** can serve as a collaborative framework but need **strong cross-sectoral commitment**.

Do you know?

- Poshan Pakhwada** is a fortnight-long awareness campaign under **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, promoting nutrition and addressing malnutrition among women, children, and adolescents.
- World Obesity Atlas 2024** provides a global overview of obesity trends, projecting the prevalence of overweight and obesity and its health, social, and economic impacts. It serves as an evidence base for policymakers to design targeted obesity prevention and management strategies.
- Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS) (2016–18)** is India's first large-scale national nutrition survey. CNNS provides data on the triple burden of malnutrition—undernutrition, overweight, and micronutrient deficiencies—and offers insights on anemia and risk factors for non-communicable diseases, informing targeted nutrition interventions and policies.

Why are 'sugar boards' necessary in schools?

Why in news: CBSE directed 24,000+ affiliated schools to set up 'sugar boards' to spread awareness about excessive sugar intake. Concept introduced by food influencer Revant Himatsingka through DIY workshops with students.

Prelims and Mains context:

- 'Sugar boards' visually depict the **amount of sugar in aerated drinks and packaged juices**.
- Boards include:** Recommended sugar limits, Sugar content in popular foods, Health risks of high sugar intake, Healthier alternatives.

Why are 'Sugar Boards' Necessary?

- Supported by **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)**.
- Rising **Type-2 Diabetes** among children. Contributing factors: **High sugar intake, Easy availability of sugary, processed foods in schools**.
- WHO recommendation:** Max 5% of daily calorie intake.

India's Regulatory Stand and Gaps

- FSSAI convened panels to define **High Fat, Salt, Sugar (HFSS)** foods for school meals.
- No final definition or **Health Star Rating system** yet for front-of-pack labelling.
 - Health Star Rating (HSR) system** is a voluntary front-of-pack labelling system introduced by the **Australian and New Zealand governments**. It rates **healthiness of packaged foods** on a scale from **0.5 to 5 stars**.
 - HSR helps consumers **compare similar products quickly**, based on **sugar, sodium, saturated fat, fibre, protein, and fruit/vegetable content**. The system promotes **healthier food choices**.
- Current FSSAI rules:** "Low sugar" claim allowed only if **≤5g per 100g**. No official **HFSS intake limits for Indian population**. India uses **WHO cut-off of 25g sugar/day (6 teaspoons)**, but experts demand **India-specific lower limits** due to **genetic vulnerability**.

Points of Difference	Type 1 Diabetes	Type 2 Diabetes	Gestational Diabetes	Other Types of Diabetes
Cause	Autoimmune destruction of insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas	Insulin resistance and/or insufficient insulin production	Develops during pregnancy due to hormonal changes	Includes monogenic diabetes (MODY, Neonatal), Type 3c (pancreatic disease-related), steroid-induced, LADA (type 1.5), and others
Age of Onset	Usually in children and young adults, but can occur at any age	Adults mostly, but increasingly children and adolescents	During pregnancy	Varies (neonatal, young adults, or related to other conditions)
Insulin Production	Little or no insulin produced	Insulin produced but not effectively used	Usually normal but the body is insulin resistant	Varies by specific type

Symptoms	Rapid onset of symptoms like excessive thirst, urination, weight loss, fatigue	Gradual symptoms, often mild initially	Usually asymptomatic or mild, detected by screening	Symptoms depend on the type
Treatment	Requires daily insulin injections	Lifestyle changes, oral medications, sometimes insulin	Controlled by diet, exercise; insulin if required	Treatment varies; some require insulin, others oral meds
Prognosis	Lifelong condition requiring insulin therapy	Chronic condition with risk of complications if uncontrolled	Usually resolves after delivery, but increased risk of type 2 diabetes later	Depends on the type and timely diagnosis

Diseases

Researchers call for wider access to genetic screening for diabetes patients in India

Why in news: Scientists from Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), in collaboration with Washington University School of Medicine, have discovered a new subtype of **Maturity-Onset Diabetes of the Young**.

Prelims context:

- **MODY (Maturity Onset Diabetes of the Young)** is a **rare, inherited, non-insulin-dependent diabetes** caused by **single gene mutations** with **autosomal dominant inheritance**. **13 MODY subtypes** have been recognised so far, and the newly identified variant challenges existing assumptions about the condition.
- It usually **manifests in non-obese adolescents or young adults (before 25 years)**, often with a **strong family history**.
- **Accurate diagnosis** is crucial, as some types respond to **oral sulfonylurea drugs**, while others require only **lifestyle modifications**. **Genetic testing** confirms the diagnosis of MODY.

Are vaccine-preventable diseases rising?

Why in news: Diseases like **measles, meningitis, and yellow fever** are re-emerging due to **missed vaccinations** caused by **funding cuts and disrupted immunisation programmes**. WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi issued a joint warning.

Prelims and Mains context:

- A WHO stocktake across 108 countries, mostly **low- and lower-middle-income nations**, revealed that **nearly half** face **moderate to severe disruptions** in vaccination drives.
- Over 50% of these children live in **conflict, fragile/ unstable countries**.
- U.S. has reported a **measles outbreak** in 2024 despite the disease being **eliminated there in 2000**.
- **Big Catch-Up initiative**, launched by WHO in **2023**, remains critical for reaching **children missed during COVID-19**.

Why is vaccination important?

- Immunisation is a **high-return investment**, yielding **\$54 for every dollar spent**, according to WHO.
- The **measles vaccine alone** accounts for **60%** of lives saved by immunisation.
- Globally, vaccines prevent **4.2 million deaths** each year across **14 diseases**.
- **Universal Immunization Programme** is India's initiative, covering **26 million newborns** and **34 million pregnant women** annually. Over **13 million immunisation sessions** are held every year in India.
- India was declared **polio-free in 2014** and eliminated **maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015**. New vaccines introduced include **Measles-Rubella, Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), and Rotavirus Vaccine (RVV)**.
- As per **NFHS-5 (2019–21)**, India's **full immunisation coverage** stands at **76.1%**.

What is the way forward?

- WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi urge **parents, the public, and policymakers to strengthen immunisation support**.
- Emphasise **sustained investment** in vaccines and honour commitments to the **Immunisation Agenda 2030 (World Health Assembly)** envisions a world where **everyone, everywhere, at every age, fully benefits from vaccines to improve health and well-being**.
- **Gavi's pledging summit** aims to raise **\$9 billion** to protect **500 million children** and save **at least 8 million lives** between **2026 and 2030**.

Do you know?

- **GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance)**, founded in **2000**, is a **global public-private partnership** to improve access to life-saving vaccines in **low-income countries**, aiming for **equal immunization worldwide**. India has both **benefited from and contributed to GAVI**, supporting its initiatives **financially and through vaccination**.

campaigns.

- **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**, launched in 1985 in India, provides free vaccines against 12 preventable diseases (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, Childhood Tuberculosis (BCG), Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal pneumonia (PCV), Rotavirus diarrhea (RVV), Japanese Encephalitis (JE, in endemic areas), and diseases caused by Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib)) to eligible children and pregnant women. It is one of the largest public health programs globally, significantly reducing under-5 mortality and improving immunization coverage.
- **Immunisation Agenda 2030 (IA2030)**, led by WHO, aims for 90% vaccination coverage and to halve the number of children missing vaccines by 2030, targeting 50 million lives saved.
- Gavi's Pledging Summit brings together global leaders, donors, and partners to mobilize funding for immunization, with the 2025 summit seeing record commitments for vaccine financing and partnerships.

Greater regularity

Why in news: Kerala has recorded two Nipah outbreaks (2018 and 2023) involving human-to-human transmission, and four spillovers (2019, 2021, and two in 2024). Spillovers are single cases without human transmission, often due to timely detection and isolation, unlike outbreaks which involve wider spread and fatalities.

Prelims context:

- In spillover cases, patients typically show acute encephalitis syndrome (AES), while outbreaks often present acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). ARDS cases involve higher viral load, lung symptoms, and coughing, increasing the risk of human transmission, and were responsible for most Nipah deaths.
- Routine surveillance of fruit bats, the natural hosts of Nipah, is critical as cases recur frequently in Kerala. There is a strong need to publicly share genetic sequences to facilitate faster and broader research on virus evolution.

About Nipah:

- Nipah virus (NiV) is a highly fatal zoonotic pathogen with repeated outbreaks in India, especially Kerala.
- NiV is a single-stranded, negative-sense RNA virus of the Henipavirus genus, Paramyxoviridae family.
- Natural reservoir is fruit bats (Pteropus species, flying foxes), which shed the virus in saliva, urine, and feces.
- Transmission occurs via direct contact with infected bats, pigs, or their secretions, and through contaminated food such as fruits. Human-to-human transmission is possible through close contact and body fluids.
- Initial symptoms include fever, headache, sore throat, cough, vomiting, and fatigue. Severe symptoms include encephalitis, acute respiratory distress, seizures, confusion, coma, with a high fatality rate of 40–75%.

Lancet report validates India's stigma study for sickle cell disease, terms it a 'robust tool'

Why in news: India has the second-highest prevalence of Sickle Cell Disease globally, after sub-Saharan Africa.

Prelims and Mains context:

- ICMR has developed India's first stigma scale for SCD — ICMR-SCD Stigma Scale for India (ISSSI). ISSSI includes two tools: ISSSI-Pt (patient scale) and ISSSI-Cg (caregiver scale), and is the fourth stigma scale globally.
- The study was conducted across six SCD-endemic districts: Alluri Seetharama Raju (AP), Anuppur (MP), Chhoteudepur (Gujarat), Kandhamal (Odisha), Mysuru (Karnataka), and Udaguri (Assam).
- SCD is caused by the inheritance of two mutated β-globin genes, leading to the formation of abnormal sickle haemoglobin. SCD is more prevalent among tribal populations in India due to limited healthcare, socioeconomic challenges, and misinformation.
- The National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission aims to eliminate SCD as a public health problem and monitor intervention outcomes.

About Sickle Cell Disease:

- It is caused by a genetic abnormality: If both parents carry sickle cell trait, the child has significant chances of being born with the hereditary disease. While healthy individuals have disc-shaped RBCs, those with sickle cell disease have crescent or sickle-like RBCs.
- This genetic mutation leads to the formation of red blood cells that are rigid, sticky, and shaped like a sickle. These sickled cells can obstruct blood flow in small vessels, resulting in pain, organ damage, and increased risk of infections due to their premature destruction in the spleen.
- It is an autosomal recessive disease or Mendelian disorder. It is a chronic single gene disorder. Cause: By a mutation in the hemoglobin-β gene (found on chromosome 11) which results in defective hemoglobin.
- Treatment: Blood Transfusions can alleviate anemia and lower the risk; Hydroxyurea drug helps decrease frequency of painful episodes; Gene Therapy: Bone marrow or stem cell transplants, using techniques like CRISPR; US FDA approved two gene therapies designed for sickle cell disease: Lyfgenia and Casgevy.
- Sickle Cell Anaemia in India: India bears the world's second largest burden of SCD (Nigeria 1st). SCD is included in the 21 disabilities under Disabilities Act, 2016. MP has highest tribal population and also has the highest burden of sickle cell anaemia.

- **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** launched in 2023 to eliminate Sickle Cell Disease by 2047. The mission aims to provide affordable, accessible, and quality care to SCD patients, raise awareness, and screen 7 crore individuals (aged 0-40 years) in affected districts across 17 tribal-dominated states.

New COVID variants detected in India, JN.1 is most common

Why in news: One case of COVID-19 variant NB.1.8.1 and four cases of variant LF.7 have been detected in India.

Prelims context:

- WHO classifies LF.7 and NB.1.8 subvariants as **Variants Under Monitoring**, not as Variants of Concern or Interest.
- These variants are reportedly **driving a rise in COVID-19 cases in China and parts of Asia**.
- The **NB.1.8.1 case** was reported from **Tamil Nadu**, while **LF.7 cases** were found in **Gujarat**. In India, the most common variant remains **JN.1 (53%)**, followed by **BA.2 (26%)** and other **Omicron sublineages (20%)**.

Measles vaccine prevented '9 crore deaths' worldwide

Why in news: Measles was extremely common 60 years ago, infecting over 90% of children, with 25% of symptomatic cases hospitalised. The first effective measles vaccine was developed by John Enders in 1963, leading to widespread vaccination efforts in richer countries and later globally.

Prelims context:

- The **Expanded Programme on Immunisation by WHO (1970s)** and later the **Gavi Vaccine Alliance (2000, PPP, Geneva)** helped scale up measles vaccine access.
- Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), now called the Essential Programme on Immunization (EPI), was launched in 1974 to provide global access to life-saving vaccines, initially focusing on six childhood diseases and expanding to cover more diseases across all ages.
- Now, over 100 million infants (80%) receive measles vaccines annually, dramatically reducing **global child mortality**. Africa and Southeast Asia benefited the most, with 2.9 crore and 2.0 crore lives saved, respectively.
- The **measles vaccine rollout is among the most successful public health initiatives in history**.

Diet is both cause and cure for MASLD, a liver condition

Why in news: 40% of Indian population is affected by metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) compared to 30% global incidence, making it a silent pandemic.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Weight reduction is key to treating this **non-alcoholic fatty liver condition** triggered by unhealthy lifestyle and metabolic risk factors like **obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and insulin resistance**.
- **53% of Indian population remains undiagnosed** as MASLD presents **minimal or no early symptoms** until liver failure occurs. Early symptoms include **fatigue, tiredness, and mild pain on the right side of the abdomen**.
- Though MASLD is static or **reversible in 80–85% of cases**, 15% develop **steatotic hepatitis** over 7 years, and 5% **develop liver cirrhosis** over 25 years; some may even develop liver cancer.
- Recommended tests include **blood tests and ultrasound every six months** and **non-invasive fibroscan every 1–3 years**. High-risk individuals include those with **diabetes, pre-diabetes, hypertension, high lipid profile, elevated liver enzymes, family history of heart disease and liver cirrhosis**.
- Diet is both the cause and cure for MASLD, with advice to **reduce portion size, calories, and follow a protein-rich, low-carb diet**. Quitting smoking and alcohol, **intermittent fasting** are recommended.

Central team to visit Odisha following cholera outbreak

Why in news: A 14-member central team including experts from ICMR, NCDC, WHO, and food safety authorities is visiting **Jajpur, Odisha** to manage a **cholera outbreak**.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Cholera is caused by the **Vibrio cholerae bacterium**, usually spread through **contaminated food or drinking water**. It leads to **severe diarrhoea and dehydration**, and can be **fatal if untreated**, even in healthy individuals.
- Cholera toxin affects small intestine, triggering **excessive water & electrolyte loss**, leading to rapid dehydration.
- **Asymptomatic individuals** can spread bacteria through **stool contamination of water sources** for **7 to 14 days**.
- Symptoms include **diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, and dehydration**, with signs such as **sunken eyes, dry mouth, extreme thirst, dry skin, low urination, and muscle cramps** due to **electrolyte imbalance**.

Cramped muscles

Why in news: A **cramp** is a sudden, involuntary tightening of a muscle or group of muscles that a person **can't immediately relax**. The muscle **locks up all at once**, often feeling like a **sharp knot** and can **hurt for a while**.

Prelims context:

- Muscle cramps typically occur in legs or hands due to dehydration, exercise, or low potassium or magnesium levels. Menstrual cramps in the uterus are hormone-driven contractions to expel the uterine lining.
- Stomach cramps occur due to gas, infections, or in people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
- In all cases, a cramp happens when muscle cells are stressed and begin to misfire.
- People are at greater risk of cramps if they have diabetes, thyroid problems, kidney disease.

Drugs and Medicines**Study highlights lack of access to right antibiotics in eight countries**

Why in news: Only 7.8% of patients with drug-resistant infections in India received an appropriate antibiotic, according to a study in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. Lack of access to appropriate treatment for drug-resistant infections increases morbidity and mortality, raises healthcare costs, and prolongs hospitalisation.

Mains context:

- India's 7.8% treatment rate compares with an average of 6.9% across all eight countries.
- High-end antibiotics are overused and misused in India, contributing significantly to antibiotic resistance.

India's cough syrup crackdown — what prompted it and what follows

Why in news: The Central government has restricted the use of a fixed drug combination (FDC) — chlorpheniramine maleate and phenylephrine hydrochloride — for children below four years.

Prelims and Mains context:

- A warning label is now mandatory on packaging, inserts, and promotional materials.
- Chlorpheniramine is an antihistamine for symptoms like runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing.
- Phenylephrine is a decongestant that narrows blood vessels for temporary relief.

Paediatricians Welcome the Ban

- Experts call combination irrational for young children due to unpredictable effects on heart rate, blood pressure
- First-generation antihistamines, like chlorpheniramine, are linked to respiratory depression and apnoea.
- Despite risks, many over-the-counter syrups still contain the drug, often misused for its sedative effect.
- Second-generation antihistamines like cetirizine and fexofenadine are considered safer alternatives.

Despite 'risky' symptoms, drug-based weight loss is gaining footing in the Indian market

Why in news: Tirzepatide (Mounjaro), a hormone-mimicking drug by Eli Lilly, is the latest entrant in India's weight-loss and wellness market, with growing demand since 2025. Approved by the CDSCO, it is prescribed weekly as an injectable drug for obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Prelims context:

- It works by activating Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) and Gastric inhibitory polypeptide (GIP) receptors, increasing satiety and reducing food intake, and is considered more effective than semaglutide (Ozempic), which acts only on GLP-1. Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, appetite loss, and indigestion.
 - Semaglutide, used in Ozempic, is available in India only through grey markets and has side effects like muscle loss and skin sagging when administered in high doses. Use of such drugs requires individualised medical consultation, especially due to contraindications like thyroid cancer risk, and should not be self-administered.
 - The weight-loss industry in India has surged since the 1990s, supported by urbanisation, fast food culture, sedentary lifestyle, and stress-related eating habits. According to NFHS 2019–21, 40% of women and 12% of men in India are abdominally obese, a major contributor to lifestyle diseases.
- (Mains part)

What are the most commonly used cancer drugs?

Why in news: A major investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (nonprofit news organisation based in London), revealed that chemotherapy drugs exported to over 100 countries failed quality tests.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Cancer is caused by uncontrolled cell growth due to genetic mutations.
- Chemotherapy drugs aim to disrupt cell replication or induce cell death, thus shrinking or eliminating tumors.

Six Key Drugs Identified in the Investigation

- Cisplatin: Platinum-based drug discovered in the 1960s. Mechanism: Binds to DNA, blocking replication. Treats: Testicular, ovarian, bladder, and lung cancers. Side effects: Kidney damage, immune suppression, hearing loss.

- **Oxaliplatin:** Also platinum-based; similar mechanism to cisplatin. **Treats:** Primarily **advanced colorectal cancer**. **Side effects:** Similar to cisplatin (e.g. nerve damage, immune suppression).
- **Cyclophosphamide:** **DNA-disrupting** agent. **Treats:** Breast cancer, leukaemia, sarcoma, lymphoma. **Side effects:** Bladder inflammation, white blood cell suppression.
- **Doxorubicin:** Known as the "**red devil**" due to its color and potency. **Derived from Streptomyces** bacteria. **Treats:** Breast cancer, leukaemia, lymphoma, sarcoma. **Side effects:** Heart damage, hair loss, infection risk.
- **Methotrexate:** **Inhibits DNA synthesis** by blocking folate metabolism. **Treats:** Leukaemia, lymphoma, solid tumors. **Given in high doses**, followed by leucovorin to mitigate toxicity.
- **Leucovorin (Folinic acid):** **Not a chemotherapy drug**, but a **rescue agent**. **Purpose:** Protects healthy cells from methotrexate toxicity. **Introduced in the 1950s**, classified as a **form of Vitamin B9**.

Ketamine

Why in news: Ketamine is an **anaesthetic** classified as a "**dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen**" by the US Drug Enforcement Administration. It creates a **feeling of detachment from pain and the environment**.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Ketamine was **first used as an anaesthetic for animals in the 1960s**, and was **approved for human use by the US FDA in the 1970s**.
- The **use of ketamine for treating depression and mental illnesses is recent**, typically for patients unresponsive to traditional therapies.
- Ketamine is also used **recreationally**, and is popularly known as K or Special K.
- For mental health treatment, it is administered via **IV, nasal spray, or tablet**, typically **once or twice a week for 6–8 weeks**. Recreational users **snort the white crystalline powder**, or may **inject or smoke it**.

Health Policies

MMR shows a declining trend, reveal latest data

Why in news: India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) declined to 93 per lakh live births in 2019–21, from 97 in 2018–20 and 103 in 2017–19, as per data from Office of the Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India.

Prelims and Mains context:

- **MMR is highest in the 20–29 age group**, followed by the 30–34 age group.
- States with high MMRs include **Madhya Pradesh (175)**, **Assam (167)**, **Uttar Pradesh (151)**, **Odisha (135)**, **Chhattisgarh (132)**, **West Bengal (109)**, and **Haryana (106)**. The **Sample Registration System (SRS)** is used by the Registrar-General to estimate **fertility and mortality**, including MMR.
- **Best-Performing States in MMR (Maternal Mortality Ratio):** Kerala – 20, Telangana – 45, Tamil Nadu – 49.
- **MMR is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births** during a specific time period.
- The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aims to reduce global MMR to **below 70 per 100,000 live births**.
- Maternal death is defined by WHO as the death of a woman **while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination**, excluding accidental causes.
- Major causes of **maternal death** include complications during and after pregnancy, childbirth, or abortion.

WHO adopts Pandemic Agreement to strengthen global health preparedness

Why in news: WHO member states **unanimously adopted the world's first Pandemic Agreement** to strengthen global collaboration and response to future pandemics. The **Agreement was approved by the World Health Assembly** after over **three years of negotiations** post-COVID-19.

Prelims and Mains context:

- The Agreement aims to **make the world safer and more equitable** in facing future pandemics. It outlines **principles, approaches, and tools for international coordination** in pandemic **prevention, preparedness, and response**. Key elements include **equitable and timely access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics** to avoid disparities witnessed during past health crises.

About World Health Assembly:

- The **World Health Assembly (WHA)** is the **decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO)**, comprising representatives from all 194 member states.
- It meets **annually, usually in May in Geneva**, to set global health policies, approve budgets, appoint the WHO Director-General, and review WHO's work.
- The **WHA shapes global health priorities and strategies** to promote **worldwide health and well-being**.

A medical oxygen access gap SE Asia must bridge

Why in news: Oxygen is a life-saving essential medicine with no substitute. Over 5 billion people globally lack access to safe, quality, and affordable medical oxygen.

Prelims and Mains context:

- South Asia and East Asia-Pacific face the highest unmet need (78% and 74% coverage gap).
- COVID-19 pandemic exposed serious vulnerabilities in oxygen infrastructure, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Barriers to Oxygen Access

- **Infrastructure:** Only 54% of LMIC hospitals have pulse oximeters; only 58% have access to medical oxygen.
- **Delayed diagnosis and treatment** due to lack of monitoring tools, especially during respiratory outbreaks.
- **Skilled workforce shortage:** Lack of biomedical engineers and technicians.
- LMICs struggle with competing healthcare priorities, limiting funds for oxygen infrastructure.

Strategies for Sustainable Oxygen Systems

- **Policy-level Reforms:** Governments must integrate oxygen into Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
- Use the WHO Access to Medical Oxygen Scorecard to track implementation and ensure accountability.
- Ensure a clear regulatory framework for quality, safety, storage, and distribution.
- Promote local manufacturing to reduce import dependence and improve accessibility.
- Encourage decentralised production and last-mile delivery.
- Use innovative solutions: portable oxygen concentrators, solar-powered generators, booster pumps, community hubs. Solarisation of oxygen plants is crucial in areas with power disruption; successful models seen in Ethiopia and Nigeria. In South-East Asia, WHO enabled cross-border training (e.g., Nepal-Bhutan model) to install and maintain PSA plants. Governments must lead with policy integration and long-term planning.

Government plans to wind down National Polio Surveillance Network centres in India

Why in news: Government has proposed a phased wind-down of the WHO-established National Polio Surveillance Network.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Polio surveillance will be integrated into the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).
- India was declared polio-free in 2014, after sustained oral polio campaigns and multi-agency coordination.
- It is recommended that India shift from oral polio vaccine (OPV) to injectable polio vaccine (IPV) before altering surveillance systems.

About National Polio Surveillance Network (NPSN):

- It tracks and monitors acute flaccid paralysis cases to detect and eliminate poliovirus transmission in India.
- NPSN played a key role in India achieving polio-free status through timely case detection, investigation, and immunization response.

About Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP):

- It was launched in 2004 with World Bank assistance, is a decentralized, state-based surveillance system.
- IDSP uses IT-enabled laboratory data to monitor epidemic-prone diseases and enables early detection and response through trained Rapid Response Teams.
- IDSP integrates surveillance efforts across Centre, State, and District levels.

Cash Plus model pushes up early breastfeeding rate, dietary diversity among Rajasthan women

Why in news: India's first State-led pilot to combine Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) with Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC), implemented to augment PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) by offering additional support including counselling and health sessions.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Key outcomes from the report card:
 - 49% rise in early breastfeeding (now 90% of newborns).
 - 44% women more receptive to home-based counselling.
 - 49% improvement in dietary diversity among pregnant women.
 - 54% increase in women using cash for nutrition purposes.

Programme Features and Implementation

- Includes second-time mothers, unlike PMMVY which is for the first child.
- Started in late 2020 as a pilot in 5 districts: Udaipur, Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, and Baran.

- Statewide scale-up in 2022. Offers home-based and group counselling on maternal and child nutrition and health. Incorporates community engagement, digital media, and focuses on male and youth participation.

About PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):

- It is a centrally sponsored maternity benefit scheme, launched in 2017 to provide financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women for their first live birth.
- The scheme offers a cash incentive of Rs. 5,000, paid in three installments linked to early registration, at least one antenatal check-up, and child immunization.
- It aims to partially compensate for wage loss during pregnancy and promote safe delivery, maternal nutrition, and institutional healthcare, reducing maternal and infant mortality.
- Eligibility: women aged 19 and above, having their first live birth, excluding those in regular government employment or receiving similar benefits under other laws.
- The scheme supports improving maternal and child health indicators and aligns with Sustainable Development Goals, addressing socio-economic inequalities and promoting healthcare usage.

U.K. lawmakers approve a Bill for assisted dying

Why in news: U.K. passed the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, also known as the Assisted Dying Bill.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Allows terminally ill adults in England and Wales with less than six months to live to choose assisted death under strict safeguards. It would require validation by two doctors, a psychiatrist, a senior lawyer, and a social worker.
- The Bill will now move to the House of Lords for further consideration.

Related news:

- Ministry of Health released draft Guidelines for Withdrawal of Life Support in Terminally Ill Patients to operationalise the Supreme Court's 2018 and 2023 orders on right to die with dignity for all Indians.
- Guidelines include:
 - Setting up of Primary and Secondary Medical Boards at level of hospital, which will determine when further medical treatment may not be beneficial to a terminally ill patient;
 - Nomination of doctors by district CMO or equivalent to hospital-level Secondary Medical Boards, which will confirm or reject opinion of Primary Medical Boards. Secondary Medical Board members must be different from those on the Primary Medical Board.
- There is no dedicated legislation in India on withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatment. But SC's judgment and these guidelines make it clear that withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatment is legal.
- SC in Common Cause vs Union of India (2018) recognised right to die with dignity under Article 21.
- Withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment takes place either through informed refusal by a patient with decision-making capacity or through an advance medical directive ('living will'). SC in its 2018 judgment also laid down framework for making advance medical directives or living wills and simplified it in 2023.
- Living wills are written documents made by a person of age 18 years or older with decision-making capacity, expressing their will on how they would wish to be treated if they lose such capacity.
- It should detail at least two surrogate decision-makers — anyone whom the person trusts, from family to neighbours, who can make decisions on behalf of the person if they lose decision-making capacity. It becomes legal when it is signed in presence of executor and 2 witnesses, and attested before a notary or gazetted officer.
- Hospital must notify decisions on withdrawing life-sustaining treatment to the local judicial magistrate.
- Government Medical College Hospital (GMCH) in Kerala's Kollam district opened a 'Living Will Information Counter' to spread awareness & became the first hospital in the country to establish such a counter.

India set to integrate rare-blood donor registry with e-Rakt Kosh

Why in news: Union Health Ministry aims to integrate the Rare Donor Registry with e-Rakt Kosh, enabling real-time access to rare blood groups across India. Developed by ICMR-NIIH, the registry includes 4,000+ screened donors and covers 300+ rare blood markers, such as Bombay, P-Null, and Rh-null groups.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Integration will help patients find specially matched donors quickly, reducing complications for those with thalassemia, sickle cell disease, and other haemoglobinopathies.
- A multiplex PCR-based DNA kit tailored for Indian patients allows rapid identification of rare blood types.
- ICMR has also cut the cost of sickle cell testing from ₹350 to under ₹50. India-developed testing kits for Haemophilia A and Von Willebrand Disease are gaining global attention and can now be used at PHCs.
- Over 1.4 lakh haemophilia patients in India will benefit from this low-cost, visual card-based POC test, commercialised by Bhat Biotech under the brand BioScan.

About Rare Donor Registry of India (RDRI):

- It is a national database developed by ICMR-NIIH, maintaining a screened list of over 4,000 donors with rare blood types.
- RDRI aids patients with conditions like thalassemia and sickle cell disease who require matched transfusions.
- Its integration with e-Rakt Kosh enables real-time access and coordination of rare blood groups nationwide.

About e-Rakt Kosh:

- It is an online blood bank management system under the National Health Mission, providing data on blood availability, blood banks, and donor management across India. Integration with the Rare Donor Registry strengthens blood transfusion services by providing faster, safer access to rare blood groups.

Misc**Global Tobacco Epidemic 2025**

Why in News: World Health Organization (WHO) released the tenth report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2025.

Prelims and Mains context:**Key Findings of Report:**

- MPOWER Initiative:** Set of six cost-effective tobacco control measures launched by WHO to help countries reduce tobacco use and prevent tobacco-related disease and death.
- MPOWER stands for six action areas:**
 - M:** Monitoring tobacco use and policies.
 - P:** Protecting people from tobacco smoke.
 - O:** Offering help to quit tobacco.
 - W:** Warning about the dangers of tobacco.
 - E:** Enforcing bans on advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.
 - R:** Raising taxes on tobacco.
- Most implemented measure:** Large graphic health warnings on cigarette packages.
- Mass media campaigns:** India became the first country to apply tobacco control regulations to digital streaming content.
- Taxation:** Least adopted MPOWER measure; in India, per capita GDP needed to buy cigarettes has decreased since 2014. **Smoking-related deaths:** Over 7 million annually from tobacco-related diseases.

Steps Taken to Tackle Tobacco Epidemic:

- Global:**
 - WHO FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control):** Adopted 2003, ratified by 180+ countries; India joined in 2005.
 - 3 by 35 Initiative (WHO):** Increase prices of tobacco, alcohol, sugary drinks by ≥50% by 2035.
- India:**
 - COTPA, 2003:** Prohibits smoking in public places, bans sale to minors.
 - COTPA (Packaging & Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2022:** Mandated health warning images on packages.
 - National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP):** Awareness, reducing production & supply.
 - Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019.**

Bihar sex ratio drops from 964 to 891 in two years: CRS data

Why in news: Bihar recorded the lowest sex ratio at birth (SRB) in 2022 among all States and UTs with 891 girls per 1,000 boys, as per the Civil Registration System (CRS) report by the Registrar-General of India (RGI).

Prelims and Mains context:

- Bihar's SRB has declined consistently since 2020, from 964 in 2020, to 908 in 2021, and 891 in 2022.
- Other States with low SRB in 2022 were Maharashtra (906), Telangana (907), and Gujarat (908).
- Nagaland reported the highest SRB at 1,068, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (1,036), Ladakh (1,027), Meghalaya (972), and Kerala (971). Assam, which had the lowest SRB in 2021 (863), improved to 933 in 2022.
- The Sample Registration System (SRS) is the largest demographic survey in India, conducted by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner providing annual estimates on fertility and mortality indicators.

Demographic Indicators

India (Year 2025)	
Population (Billion)	1.46
Population aged 0-14, per cent	24
Population aged 10-19, per cent	17
Population aged 10-24, per cent	26
Population aged 15-64, per cent	68
Population aged 65 and older, per cent	7
Fertility (Total fertility rate, per woman)	1.9
Life Expectancy (Male)	71
Life Expectancy (Female)	74

Source: UNFPA 2025



- SRS provides reliable annual estimates of fertility and mortality indicators such as **birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate, and total fertility rate** at **national and state levels**.
- It uses a **dual record system**, combining **continuous enumeration and periodic surveys** to ensure accuracy.
- **SRS has been a key source of demographic data in India since 1971.**
- States like **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttarakhand** showed a **general rise in registered births** since 2013, despite occasional dips. States/UTs like **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Delhi** showed a **general decline in registered births** despite fluctuations.
- Of the total registered births in 2022, **males accounted for 52.4% and females 47.6%**, with **43% in rural and 56.5% in urban areas**. The number of **still births** in 2022 reduced to **1.15 lakh** from **1.24 lakh** in 2021.
- Of the total registered deaths in 2022, **men accounted for 60.4% and women 39.6%**, with **59.5% deaths in rural areas and 40.5% in urban areas**.

TOTAL FERTILITY RATE		
NFHS 5 vs NFHS 4		
LOWEST		
Punjab	1.6	1.6
West Bengal	1.6	1.8
Maharashtra	1.7	1.9
Karnataka	1.7	1.8
Andhra	1.7	1.8
HIGHEST		
Bihar	3.0	3.4
Meghalaya	2.9	3.0
UP	2.4	2.7
Jharkhand	2.3	2.6
Manipur	2.2	2.6

Kozhikode City honoured with WHO's GNAFCC Membership

Why in News: Kozhikode city has been honoured with a **membership in the WHO's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC)**.

Prelims context:

About GNAFCC:

- **Established:** 2010. **Members:** 1300 members from 51 countries.
- **Aim:** To connect cities, communities & organizations worldwide with the vision of making communities great places to grow older in.
- **Objectives:** Inspire change by showing what can be done and how, Connect cities & communities worldwide to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge & experience, Support cities & communities to find innovative and evidence-based solutions.

Schemes and Policies

Modi champions 'orange economy' at WAVES

Why in news: Appealing to global companies to create content in India, PM Modi said that the **strength of Indian culture** lies in respecting other cultures. He stated, "This is the right time for 'create in India, create for the world,'" assuring that **global content will be respected** in India.

Prelims and Mains context:

- India is becoming an **orange economy** highlighting economic activities leveraging creativity, culture, and intellectual property.
- The **Orange Economy**, also known as the **Creative Economy**, refers to economic activities based on creativity, culture, and intellectual property.
- It transforms ideas, talents, and cultural heritage into goods and services.
- Industries under the Orange Economy include arts, media, design, film, music, gaming, and digital content.

Centre plans revision of 'safe harbour' clause

Why in news: The government plans to revise guidelines for intermediary platforms and revisit the "safe harbour" provisions to disincentivise fake news. In response to the Pahalgam terror attack, the government blocked several YouTube channels for spreading fake news, including two Indian channels.

Prelims and Mains context:

- Due diligence norms for intermediaries may be revisited to require proactive removal of fake news.
- Under Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000, intermediary platforms enjoy **safe harbour** from liability for user-generated content, if they comply with government guidelines. The government has often said it intends to increase accountability of platforms, but no concrete steps have been taken yet.
- "Self-regulation" is currently the best approach to address fake news and ruled out a new law, citing concerns regarding freedom of speech. The government supports giving a statutory basis to the PIB Fact Check Unit, as proposed in IT Rules 2021 amendments, to tackle fake news on government plans and initiatives.
- Ministry of Electronics and IT is filing a special leave petition against the Bombay High Court judgment that struck down the Fact Check Unit's authority to eliminate safe harbour for content deemed misinformation.

Cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims

Why in news: Road accident victims across India will now be entitled to cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh for the first seven days at designated hospitals. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways issued a Gazette notification announcing the **Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025**.

Prelims context:

- It aims to reduce deaths from road accidents by ensuring timely medical intervention.
- The National Health Authority has been designated as the implementing agency for the scheme.

About Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025:

- It mandates cashless medical treatment for individuals injured in road accidents involving motor vehicles.
- The scheme provides coverage up to Rs. 1.5 lakh for treatment within seven days of the accident.
- It aims to ensure timely emergency care during the critical 'golden hour' without financial burden.
- The National Health Authority coordinates its implementation across empanelled hospitals nationwide.

GOVERNANCE**Civil Services****The need for gender equity in urban bureaucracy**

Why in news: By 2050, over 800 million Indians will live in cities, making India the largest driver of global urban growth.

Prelims and Mains context:

- 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments mandated 33% reservation for women in PRIs and ULGs, raised to 50% in 17 States and 1 UT.
- As of 2024, women form 46% of local elected representatives (Ministry of Panchayati Raj).
- However, the bureaucratic apparatus remains male-dominated, undermining inclusive governance.

Structural Gender Gaps in Urban Governance

- Despite increased participation in politics, women are underrepresented in administrative, planning, engineering, and policing roles.
- Women face systemic barriers in recruitment, retention, and promotion across urban governance structures.

Consequences of Bureaucratic Gender Imbalance

- Urban design ignores gendered needs: public transport dependence, caregiving trips, neighbourhood safety.
- 2019 Safetipin audit: Over 60% of public spaces poorly lit, compromising safety.
- Few women in policing and planning roles weakens the impact of community safety initiatives.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB): Promise and Pitfalls

- GRB integrates gender into public finance and planning. India adopted a Gender Budget Statement in 2005–06. Gender Budgeting Knowledge Hub Portal was recently launched by Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Delhi funded women-only buses and public lighting; Tamil Nadu applied GRB in 64 departments; Kerala embedded gender in the People's Plan Campaign.
- Despite this, UN Women and NIPFP studies highlight weak monitoring, tokenism, and limited institutional capacity in many ULGs. GRB often misses key urban needs like pedestrian safety and childcare infrastructure.

Global Best Practices and Lessons

- Philippines: 5% of local budgets reserved for gender programmes.
- Rwanda: GRB integrated into national planning with oversight.

Way Forward

- Move beyond political quotas to ensure bureaucratic representation of women.
- Implement affirmative action, quotas, and scholarships in planning and engineering to break structural barriers.
- Countries like Rwanda, Brazil, South Korea, and Tunisia show that gender-balanced governance improves maternal health, safety, sanitation, and education outcomes.
- Institutionalise GRB, support it with capacity-building, and mandate gender audits and participatory budgeting.

Himachal Police Bill gets President's approval

Why in news: The President has given assent to the Himachal Pradesh Police (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Prelims context:

- The amendment shields public servants from arrest without government sanction.
- The amendment aims to allow public servants to discharge duties fearlessly.
- The Bill proposes protection from arrest for government officials.

Internet

The role of the Internet in spreading misinformation

Why in news: During the recent India-Pakistan crisis, unverified videos, fake images, and false casualty reports circulated widely on social media and were even amplified by news channels, fuelling fear and misinformation.

Prelims and Mains context:

- This trend reflects broader concerns highlighted in **Lokniti-CSDS survey (Media in India: Access, Practices, Concerns and Effects)**, which found that **misinformation significantly shapes public perception, trust, behaviour**.

Rising Public Concern and Declining Trust

- Nearly half of all active Internet and social media users reported **encountering fake news** at some point.

Changing News Consumption and the Need for Literacy

- The **Reuters Institute's 2024 Digital News Report** shows: Over 70% of Indians access news online. YouTube (54%) and WhatsApp (48%) are leading platforms for news. This shift underscores the crucial role of social media in shaping public opinion and the urgent need to promote media literacy, critical thinking, and accountability to help users identify reliable information and resist misinformation.

Reports

India in Global Gender Gap Report 2025

Why in news: India ranks 131 out of 148 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, slipping two places from 2024. (world Economic Forum)

Prelims and Mains context:

- India's gender parity score stands at **64.1%**, making it **one of the lowest in South Asia**.
- India's global position declined, while the worldwide gender gap closed to **68.8%**, but full parity is still **123 years away** at current pace.

Comparison with Other Nations

- Iceland topped the Index for **16th consecutive year**, followed by Finland, Norway, the U.K., and New Zealand.
- Bangladesh emerged as **South Asia's best performer**, jumping **75 places to 24th rank**, due to significant **progress in political empowerment and economic participation**.

Rank 2025	Country	Score 2025 (0-1, 1 = parity)
1	Iceland	0.926
2	Finland	0.879
3	Norway	0.863
4	United Kingdom	0.838
5	New Zealand	0.827

Index evaluates gender parity in the following four categories:

- Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, Political Empowerment.

Economic Participation and Opportunity

- India improved by **+0.9 percentage points** in this category.
- Estimated earned income parity** rose from **28.6%** to **29.9%**.
- Labour force participation rate** held steady at **45.9%**, India's highest so far.
- Overall, India's economic score improved by **0.3 points** in absolute terms.

Components	2025		2024	
	Score (0-1)	Rank	Score (0-1)	Rank
Global Gap Gender Index	0.644	131	0.641	129
Economic Participation and Opportunity	0.407	144	0.398	142
Educational Attainment	0.971	110	0.964	112
Health and survival	0.954	143	0.951	142
Political Empowerment	0.245	69	0.251	65

Educational Attainment

- India achieved a score of **97.1%**, showing **positive shifts in female literacy and tertiary education enrollment**.
- Indicates near **full parity** in access to education.

Health and Survival

- India recorded **improvements in sex ratio at birth** and **healthy life expectancy**, leading to a **higher parity score** in this category.

Political Empowerment

- India **declined in political empowerment**, one of the weakest areas:
 - Female representation in Parliament** dropped from **14.7%** to **13.8%**.
 - Women in ministerial roles** fell from **6.5%** to **5.6%**.

- Despite the **passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in 2023**, mandating **one-third reservation in Parliament and State Legislatures**, its **implementation is delayed until after 2029** due to the need for **Census and delimitation**.

Challenges and the Way Forward

- The **lack of immediate enforcement** of the Women's Reservation Act and **low female political representation** have **weakened India's performance** in political empowerment.
- However, there is **no legal restriction** preventing political parties from **voluntarily fielding more women candidates before 2029**.
- India must focus on:** Consolidating gains in education and health, Bridging economic and political gaps and Implementing policy reforms and proactive representation strategies.

Do you know?

- Gender Inequality Index (GII)** is published by **UNDP** and measures **reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market inequality**; India's **GII score is 0.403**, ranking **102 out of 172 countries (2023)**.
- Gender Development Index (GDI)** by UNDP compares **female and male HDI values** in health, education, and income; India's **GDI is 0.874**, with **female HDI at 0.631** and **male HDI at 0.722 (2023)**.
- Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)** is developed by **UNDP and UN Women**, covering **life & health, education & skills, financial inclusion & labour, and decision-making participation**.
- Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)**, also by **UNDP and UN Women**, measures **empowerment in health, education, inclusion, decision-making, and violence against women**; India scores **0.52**, indicating **moderate empowerment**.

About Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI):

- Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)** adjusts **HDI** by accounting for **inequality in health, education, and income**. Provides a **more realistic measure of human development**.
- IHDI = HDI** when there is **no inequality**.
- IHDI < HDI** when **inequality rises**, showing **actual level of human development** after disparities.
- India faced a **30.7% loss in human development** due to inequality.
- In India, the **poorest 40% population** holds only **20.2% income share**.
- The **richest 10% population** holds **25.5% income share**.

For first time, India breaks into top 100 in global SDG rankings

Why in news: India has secured **99th rank** out of 167 nations in the **2025 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index**, its first time in the **top 100**. (India scored **67**).

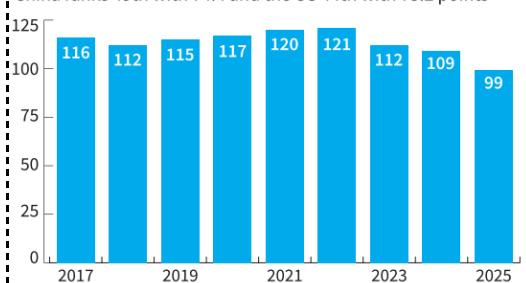
Prelims and Mains context:

- The **SDG Index** is part of the **Sustainable Development Report (SDR)** released by the **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**. The index measures **progress on 17 SDGs** adopted by **UN member states in 2015**, with **100** as the target score for full achievement.
- China ranked 49th** and the **United States ranked 44th**.
- Among neighbours: **Bhutan ranked 74th (70.5)**, **Nepal 85th (68.6)**, **Bangladesh 114th (63.9)**, **Pakistan 140th (57)**, **Maldives 53rd**, and **Sri Lanka 93rd**.
- India's ranking has improved consistently: **112th in 2023**, **121st in 2022**, and **120th in 2021**.
- Despite gains, the report warns that **only 17% of SDG targets** are on track globally for achievement by **2030**.
- The slow progress is attributed to **conflicts, structural vulnerabilities**, and **limited fiscal space** in many regions.

Rank	Country	Score 2025
2025		
1	Finland	87.0
2	Sweden	85.7
3	Denmark	85.3
4	Germany	83.7
5	France	83.1

Moving up

India ranks **99th** on the **2025 SDG Index** with a score of **67**, while China ranks **49th** with **74.4** and the US **44th** with **75.2 points**



The **SDR is authored by economist Jeffrey Sachs** and highlights **European dominance**, with **Finland, Sweden, and Denmark** holding the top three spots. **19 of the top 20 countries** on the SDG Index are located in **Europe**.

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