

CORPORATE OFFICE

Delhi Office

706 Ground Floor Dr. Mukherjee
Nagar Near Batra Cinema Delhi -
110009

Noida Office

Basement C-32 Noida Sector-2
Uttar Pradesh 201301



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“REWORKS ON COUNTRY’S TB ELIMINATION DRIVE”

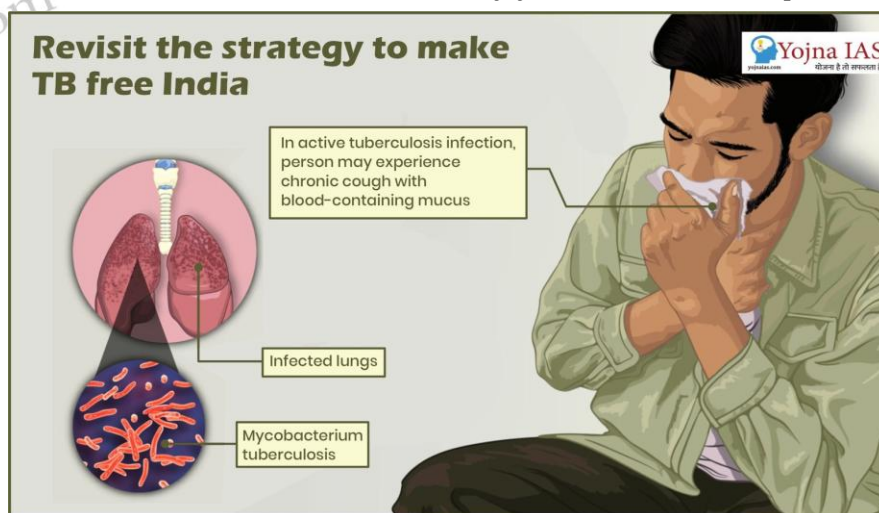
THIS ARTICLE COVERS “DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS” AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF “REWORKS ON COUNTRY’S TB ELIMINATION DRIVE”. THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE “SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY” SECTION OF THE UPSC- CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is exploring revisions to the protocol, particularly regarding TB medication and its duration. This initiative aims to rejuvenate efforts towards eliminating deaths, illnesses, and poverty caused by tuberculosis infection. India aims to swiftly reduce the burden of tuberculosis (TB) morbidity and mortality, with a concerted effort towards eliminating TB in the nation by 2025.

ABOUT TUBERCULOSIS:

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection and caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It mainly affects the lungs, can also spread to other parts of the body. It is an infectious disease, can be transmitted by the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or spits. It can be fatal if left untreated. TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year, or over 1,400 patients every day.



TYPES OF TB:

- **1. Latent TB infection:** bacteria found in the body but do not cause symptoms. This condition is not contagious.
- **2. TB disease (active TB):** The bacteria cause symptoms and can be contagious.
- **Transmission:** TB is transmitted through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or spits. People are more likely to catch TB from those they live or work with closely.
- **Risk Factors:** People likely to develop TB disease include those with HIV, diabetes, malnutrition, or compromised immune systems, as well as those who use tobacco or have a history of TB.
- **Symptoms:** Common symptoms of TB disease include prolonged cough, chest pain, and weakness or fatigue.
- **Global Impact:** After COVID-19, TB is the second leading infectious killer, with approximately 1.3 million deaths in 2022. It is present in all countries and age groups, with most cases occurring in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Prevention:** The Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine is used in some countries to prevent TB, particularly in children.

THE HIGH INCIDENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS (TB) IN INDIA CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL FACTORS:

- **Socioeconomic Conditions:** Poverty, malnutrition, and poor living conditions contribute significantly to the spread of TB. Overcrowding, poor ventilation, and inadequate housing increase the risk of transmission.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** India's developing status and limited healthcare infrastructure hinder access to quality treatment, leading to a higher incidence of TB.
- **Lack of Access to Treatment:** Many people, especially in the private sector, cannot afford the treatment drugs prescribed, which exacerbates the problem.
- **Poor Health:** Factors such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, and substance abuse weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to TB.
- **Environmental Factors:** Pollution and poor air quality can contribute to the spread of TB, as the bacteria are transmitted through the air.
- **Lack of Awareness and Education:** Not complete knowledge about TB among healthcare professionals and the general public hinders early diagnosis and proper treatment, leading to a higher incidence of the disease.
- **Drug Resistance:** The widespread misuse of anti-tubercular drugs has resulted in the emergence of drug-resistant TB, including Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) and Extensively Drug Resistant TB (XDR-TB).

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES TO COMBAT TUBERCULOSIS (TB):

- **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP):** This program aims to eliminate TB by 2025. The program includes measures such as increasing budget allocation, implementing daily fixed-dose regimens under a short, direct-observation treatment course, introducing new diagnostic technologies, and engaging the private sector.
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan:** This initiative is a comprehensive program to accelerate the country's progress towards TB elimination. It includes components such as the

Ni-kshay Mitra Initiative, which provides additional diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support to TB patients, and the Ni-kshay Digital Portal, which provides a platform for community support.

- **TB-Mukt Panchayat Initiative:** This initiative aims to get the support of more than 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats to monitor and improve the uptake of services.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission:** This mission focuses on utilising technology and creating digital health IDs for TB patients to ensure proper diagnostics and treatment are available.
- **Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana:** This program provides financial support of Rs 500 per month to TB patients through direct benefit transfer.
- **Vaccine Development:** India is actively involved in the development of two vaccines, VPM 1002 and MIP, which are currently under Phase-3 clinical trials.
- **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign:** This campaign aims to raise awareness about TB and promote community involvement in the fight to eliminate the disease.
- **Global Efforts:** India is part of global initiatives such as the WHO's "Find. Treat. All. #EndTB" program.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Early Diagnosis and Treatment:** Early detection and treatment of TB are important in preventing the spread of the disease. This involves regular checkups, chest X-rays, and sputum tests to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment and prevent the development of drug-resistant TB.
- **TB Preventive Therapy:** Preventive therapy, such as the daily dose of isoniazid (INH), can stop TB infection from progressing to disease and protect both the individual and the community from TB.
- **BCG Vaccination:** The BCG vaccine is the only licensed vaccine against TB, although its effectiveness is limited. It is more effective in preventing TB in children and in certain regions.
- **Infection Control Measures:** Implementing infection control measures in healthcare settings, such as protective masks, ventilation systems, and separate rooms for potentially infectious patients, can significantly reduce the spread of TB.
- **Community Engagement:** Raising awareness about TB and promoting community involvement against the disease can help identify and treat cases early, reducing the risk of transmission.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure Development:** Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, including access to quality treatment and diagnostic facilities, is essential for effective TB management and prevention.
- **Research and Development:** Continuing research into new vaccines, diagnostic tools, and treatment regimens is vital for improving TB prevention and management strategies.
- **Global Collaboration:** International cooperation and coordination are necessary to address the global TB burden, share best practices, and accelerate progress towards TB elimination.
- **TB Elimination Programs:** Initiatives like the National TB Elimination Programme in India and the WHO's "Find. Treat. All. #EndTB" program aims to accelerate TB elimination by increasing access to treatment and improving diagnosis and treatment outcomes.

- **Public Education and Awareness:** Educating the public about TB, its risks, and prevention strategies can promote early detection and treatment, ultimately contributing to the elimination of TB.

PRELIMS BASED QUESTION:

Q. Tuberculosis is caused by;

1. Bacteria
2. Virus
3. Protozoa
4. Fungi

Answer: A

MAINS BASED QUESTION:

Q. Despite several initiatives taken by both government and global organisations, the world has not appeared to have eliminated tuberculosis by 2030. Critically analyse.

[Vishal Yadav](#)

NONE OF THE ABOVE (NOTA)

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "NONE OF THE ABOVE (NOTA)". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITICAL SCIENCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The BJP's Shankar Lalwani has won in Indore with a massive 10.09 lakh margin, receiving 12,26,751 votes. His nearest competitor, NOTA, with 2,18,674 votes.

WHAT IS NOTA (NONE OF THE ABOVE)?

- NOTA (None of the Above) is an option provided to voters in some electoral systems, allowing them to indicate disapproval of all the candidates listed. This option allows voters to express dissatisfaction with the choices available without abstaining from the vote entirely.
- In 2013, the option 'None of the Above' (NOTA) made its debut in the electoral process during the Assembly elections across five states – Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh, before being implemented in the 2014 General Elections.
- The Election Commission of India introduced it following a 2013 Supreme Court directive in the PUCL vs. Union of India case.
- NOTA has gained popularity in India. It has been used in Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, and local body elections. Sometimes, NOTA has received more votes than winning candidates in local elections. **The inclusion of NOTA serves several purposes:**
 - **Expression of Dissatisfaction:** It gives voters a formal way to express that they do not support any candidates, rather than not voting or spoiling their ballot.

- **Encouraging Participation:** Providing an option for those who are dissatisfied with the candidates can encourage greater voter turnout. People who might otherwise refrain from voting due to dissatisfaction may still participate and choose NOTA.
- **Feedback to Political Parties:** It provides valuable feedback to political parties and candidates, signalling that a significant portion of the electorate is unhappy with the current choices. This could prompt them to reconsider their strategies or candidate selections in future elections.
- **Promoting Accountability:** It can promote greater accountability among political parties and candidates, knowing voters can reject all options formally.
- The Election Commission has clarified that although votes for NOTA (None of the Above) are counted, they are considered 'invalid votes'.
- Therefore, even if NOTA secures the most votes in a constituency, the candidate who receives the highest number of votes will be declared the winner. Thus, voting for NOTA does not influence the outcome of the election.

The efficiency and consequences of NOTA merit discussion. It allows voters to show dissatisfaction, yet it might not directly trigger consequential actions like instigating a new election or presenting fresh candidates. Still, voters need to voice their opinions within the democratic framework.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Simplify the Registration Process:** Implement automatic voter registration when citizens reach voting age. Offer online and same-day voter registration to make it easier for people to sign up.
- **Increase Accessibility:** Provide more polling stations and extend voting hours to reduce wait times and make voting more convenient. Implement mail-in and absentee voting options to accommodate those who cannot vote in person on Election Day. Ensure polling places are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Enhance Voter Education:** Conduct public information campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of voting and how to vote. Offer non-partisan voter guides that explain candidates' positions and the impact of ballot measures.
- **Incentivize Voting:** Consider implementing policies like tax credits, small monetary rewards, or other incentives for voting. To eliminate work-related barriers, explore the possibility of making Election Day a national holiday.
- **Promote Early Voting:** Allow early voting to give people more opportunities to vote at their convenience. Ensure early voting locations are accessible and well-publicized.
- **Leverage Technology:** Implement secure and reliable online voting systems where feasible, ensuring robust cybersecurity measures. Use social media and other digital platforms to remind people to vote and provide them with information on how to do so.
- **Ensure Fair Representation:** Address gerrymandering and fair redistricting to prevent voter disenfranchisement. Implement policies that ensure all communities have a voice in the electoral process.
- **Encourage Youth Participation:** Engage young people through educational programs and initiatives that emphasise the importance of voting. Use social media campaigns and influencers to reach younger demographics.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the arguments against the effectiveness of the NOTA option in elections. How do voters' rights advocates view the inclusion of NOTA in elections?

[Amit Pradhan](#)



Yojna IAS
योजना है तो सफलता है