



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

INDIA'S WINDING ROAD TO 'ENDTB'

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Context

- India's journey towards **eliminating tuberculosis (TB) by 2025**, under the **ambitious 'EndTB' campaign**, has been fraught with challenges and complexities.
- Despite significant strides, the road to achieving the targets set by the World Health Organization (WHO) remains steep and winding.

About the Tuberculosis (TB)

- It is an infectious disease that most often affects the lungs and is caused by the bacteria **Mycobacterium tuberculosis**.
 - It spreads through the air when infected people cough, sneeze or spit.
- It is the **world's leading infectious disease killer**. It is the leading cause of deaths among **people with HIV** and a major contributor to deaths associated with antimicrobial resistance.
- Treatment:** It is preventable and curable with antibiotics.
 - TB Vaccine:** The **Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine** remains the only licensed vaccine against TB; it provides moderate protection against **severe forms of TB (TB Meningitis)** in infants and young children.

Burden of TB in India

- According to the **WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2024**, India continues to **lead the global TB burden**, accounting for **26% of all TB cases and deaths**, and remains a **hub for drug-resistant TB (DR-TB)**.
- India is followed by Indonesia (10%), China (6.8%), the Philippines (6.8%), and Pakistan (6.3%).
- Multidrug-Resistant TB:** India represents **27% of the world's** multi-drug-resistant TB cases.

'EndTB' Strategy of WHO

- It aims for a **90% reduction in TB deaths**, an **80% reduction in new cases**, and **zero TB-affected families** facing catastrophic costs **by 2030**.

VISION	A world free of tuberculosis – zero deaths, disease and suffering due to tuberculosis			
GOAL	End the global tuberculosis epidemic			
INDICATORS	MILESTONES		TARGETS	
	2020	2025	SDG 2030	END TB 2035
Reduction in number of TB deaths compared with 2015 (%)	35%	75%	90%	95%
Reduction in TB incidence rate compared with 2015 (%)	20% ($<85/100\ 000$)	50% ($<55/100\ 000$)	80% ($<20/100\ 000$)	90% ($<10/100\ 000$)
TB-affected families facing catastrophic costs due to TB (%)	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero

- The **United Nations SDGs** include ending the TB epidemic by 2030 under **Goal 3**.
 - SDG Target 3.3:** It aims to '*End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases, and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases, and other communicable diseases by 2030*'.

India's Specific Targets and Performance

INDIA'S TUBERCULOSIS REPORT			
	2021	2022	2023
Estimated TB cases (in lakh)	29.6	28.2	28
Share of global burden	28%	27%	26%
Mortality (in lakh)	4.94	3.31	3.15
Share of global deaths	36%	26%	29%
Drug resistant TB (in lakh)	1.19	1.10	1.10
Share of global cases	26%	27%	27%

Source: WHO's Global TB reports

- India pledged to achieve these targets on **an accelerated timeline by 2025**, but the COVID-19 pandemic significantly hampered these efforts.
- There has been **a decline of only 18% in TB cases** between 2015 and 2023 as against the target of 50% by 2025.
 - ♦ TB deaths have declined by 24% as against a target of 75% by 2025.

Towards a TB-Free India

- **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP):** It has been at the forefront of an ambitious goal **to achieve WHO Targets by the end of 2025**, but the COVID-19 pandemic significantly hampered these efforts.
 - ♦ It has been implementing the **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination (2017–2025)**.
- **Key Achievements of NTEP:**
 - ♦ **Decline in TB Incidence:** India has achieved a noteworthy **17.7% decline in TB incidence from 2015 to 2023**, surpassing the global average decline of 8.3%.
 - ♦ **Expanded Diagnostic Reach:** In 2023, India conducted approximately 1.89 crore **sputum smear tests** and 68.3 lakh **nucleic acid amplification tests**, reflecting the programme's commitment to expanding access to early diagnosis.
 - ♦ **Shorter Treatment Regimens:** The introduction of new, shorter regimens for drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) has improved treatment adherence and reduced the burden of prolonged therapy.
- **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP)**
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMBA):** To provide people with TB with additional nutritional, diagnostic and vocational support.
- **Ni-kshay Portal:** It has been set up to track the notified TB cases.
 - ♦ **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** under the **Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana** provides financial support for TB patients by disbursing nearly Rs. 2,781 crores to around 1 crore beneficiaries.
 - ♦ Notably, **over 1.5 lakh Ni-kshay Mitras** have committed to supporting individuals affected by TB.
 - ♦ **Ni-kshay SAATHI** (Family caregiver model) to further enhance patient support systems.
- **Universal Drug Susceptibility Testing (DST):** To identify drug-resistant strains of TB early and tailor treatment accordingly.
- **New Drugs: Bedaquiline and Delamanid** for the treatment of drug-resistant TB have been included in the government's basket of drugs provided free TB patients.

Challenges on the Ground

- **Undernutrition and Comorbidities:** High-risk groups, such as individuals exposed to factors like *silicosis*, *undernutrition*, *overcrowding*, and comorbidities like diabetes, alcohol use disorders and smoking are particularly vulnerable to TB.
- **Migrant Workers:** They face additional challenges due to poor access to healthcare and difficulty continuing treatment when moving back to their native places.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** A country-wide break in the supply chain in 2023 led to shortages of key drugs, disrupting treatment and risking antibiotic resistance.
- **Diagnostic Delays:** Despite efforts to expand diagnostic capabilities, delays in diagnosis remain a significant challenge.
 - ♦ While the **NTEP's main focus has been on pulmonary TB**, **Extrapulmonary TB (EP-TB)**, which **affects organs other than the lungs**, accounts for **about 24% of notified cases**.
 - ♦ EP-TB is **often missed or diagnosed late** due to vague symptoms resembling other diseases.

Way Forward

- **Multisectoral Approach:** Tackling TB requires a multisectoral approach, addressing not only undernutrition but also other contributory factors in each geography.
- **Community Engagement:** Successful interventions have shown the importance of community participation and advocacy in achieving TB targets.

- ♦ Successful interventions, such as the collaboration with **Kudumbashree**, a **women's self-help network in Kerala**, have shown the importance of community participation and advocacy in achieving TB targets.
- **Continued Political Commitment:** The strong political commitment shown by the Government of India, including the reaffirmation of the 'End TB by 2025' goal, is crucial for sustained progress.

Conclusion

- India's journey to 'EndTB' is a testament to the country's commitment to tackling one of the world's most pressing health challenges.
- While the path is fraught with obstacles, continued efforts, multisectoral action, and community engagement are crucial to achieving the ambitious targets set by the WHO.

Source: TH



Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss the challenges and successes of India's efforts to combat tuberculosis, analyzing the impact of social determinants of health, government policies, and community involvement on the country's progress towards the 'EndTB' goal.

