Ending Tuberculosis by 2025

What is the issue?

- At the End TB Summit, 2018, the prime minister of India made a bold commitment to end tuberculosis by 2025, 5 years ahead of the global target.
- In this context, here is a look at the efforts currently underway and the way forward.

What implications does TB have?

- India still has the highest TB burden in the world.
- Despite the disease being fully curable, people still die from it.
- TB usually affects people in their most productive years and drives families into debt.
- It has a direct link to human suffering, discrimination and also poverty.
- Due to its infectious spread, it directly affects the country's economic growth as well.

What should the approach be?

- The first step is the creation of awareness as though TB affects millions, a very few know enough about it.
- People should be empowered with the necessary information to identify and recognise TB symptoms, and seek diagnosis and treatment.
- There is thus a need for multilingual, multi-stakeholder awareness effort.
- The next step is ensuring that all are provided with access to correct diagnosis and treatment for TB, regardless of the ability to pay for it.
- This can only happen if the government works with the private sector as it did in the case of polio.
- Even today, about half a million TB cases go unnotified, especially those seeking care in the private sector.
- These missing cases should be tracked and ensured that those in need of care and treatment are able to access it.
- Agents need to go door to door, identify TB patients, and provide each of them care with compassion.

What are the challenges?

- A key challenge is building a forward-looking plan to address and control

drug resistance.
- This is a man-made menace that is a major roadblock in the fight against TB.
- Every TB patient must be tested for drug resistance at the first point of care, whether in the public or private sector.
- Every patient who is diagnosed late and does not receive timely treatment continues to infect others.
- This cycle of transmission should be ended.

What are the measures in place?

- Efforts are already on to create more labs, point of care tests, an assured drug pipeline, access to new drugs, and counseling support for those affected.
- Recognising that medicines are not enough, the Nikshay Poshan Yojana was launched.
- Under this, TB patients receive Rs 500 every month while on treatment.
- This is to ensure that the patients have economic support and nutrition during the required period.
- On September 25, 2019, the 'TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign' was launched to accelerate the efforts to end TB by 2025.
- By employing a "multi-sectoral and community-led" approach, the government aims at building a national movement to end TB by 2025.
- The government has accordingly increased resource allocation towards the TB Elimination Programme four-fold.

What should be done?

- The government machinery at the field level should work with communities and provide free diagnosis and treatment to every affected individual.
- There is also a need to look beyond treatment.
- The country should involve all to fight the disease and end the stigma surrounding it.
- Every patient should seek care that is free from discrimination and with dignity.
- The community must act as a source of support for the patient, which could be achieved through education and awareness.

Source: Indian Express



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