

## Making India TB Free

### Why in news?

On World TB Day (March 24), India reaffirms its commitment to make India TB-free by 2025 by ensuring access to quality healthcare and advanced treatment.

### What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

- A potentially serious infectious disease caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that mainly affects the lungs.
- TB is spread through the air when people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit.



### What are the issues with diagnosis and treatment of TB?

- The government sector is far stretched and lacks infrastructure.
- On the other hand, the private sector has a record of overuse of diagnostics and treatment.
- Many TB-affected individuals did not visit labs for diagnosis after the pandemic started and this is likely to rise the number of affected.
- Drug resistant TB (DR-TB) is a growing burden and threatens the TB management.

### How is the economies of TB?

- TB-affected individuals and families are at risk of insufficient nutrition after COVID-19.
- The Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY), a nutritional support scheme giving a monthly sum of just Rs. 500 to TB-affected individuals, barely meets the needs.
- Patient adoption scheme is announced in which the government is asking individuals and corporates to adopt TB-affected individuals.

### What are the other issues around TB?

- **Social stigma** - TB-affected individuals often face isolation and discrimination within the health system, families and communities.
- Addressing stigma has to be done structurally within the health system, in a consistent way.
- **Mental Health** - A large percentage of TB-affected persons have mental health problems.
- It impacts the patients' ability to continue treatment.
- India urgently needs to integrate mental health services as an essential part of TB services.
- **Poor TB services** - The quality of TB service in India is still undignified and often

unaffordable.

- Investment in TB infrastructure for diagnosis and treatment in the public sector has to be increased.

### **What needs to be done to fine-tune India's strategy?**

- The government needs to employ new, innovative and long-term strategies to engage and work with the private sector as a partner.
- Providing access to new adherence technologies and drugs in both the public and private sectors.
- The capacity for reliable testing for detection of both drug-sensitive and drug-resistant TB must be expanded.
- Need to increase Nikshay Poshan Yojana support and also social support.
- A long-term stigma mitigation strategy in communities and for affected individuals and families is critical.

*According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), the private sector provides care for over 60 % of all Indians at some point.*

### **Reference**

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/india-must-fine-tune-its-strategy-to-eliminate-tuberculosis/article65945184.ece>

