Missing the 2025 TB Elimination Target

Mains: *GS II – Health*

Why in News?

India had set an ambitious national goal to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025 five years ahead of the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 2030 under its National Strategic Plan (2017–2025).

What is Tuberculosis?

- Tuberculosis is a contagious infection caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that usually spreads through the air when a person with active lung TB coughs, sneezes, or spits.
- While it is preventable and treatable with proper medicines, it remains one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases.
- **India's Self-Set Deadline (2025) -** Under the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination (2017–2025), India aimed to end TB by 2025 rather than waiting until the global 2030 target.

What are the key findings from the WHO global Tuberculosis report 2026?

- **Highest Global Share Remains in India -** Globally in 2025, an estimated **10.6 million** people developed TB and **1.13 million** died from it.
- India still accounts for **nearly one-fourth (about 25%)** of global TB cases and **around 23%** of global TB deaths.
- **Sharp Drop in TB Deaths-** India's TB mortality rate fell by **38%** between 2015 and 2025, dropping from **28 to 18 deaths per lakh population** outpacing the global mortality drop of **35%**.
- By achieving a 38% drop, India met the WHO's 2020 mortality milestone (35% reduction), though five years behind schedule and well short of the 2030 target of a 90% cut.
- **High Treatment Success -** India recorded a **94% treatment success rate** among patients with drug-susceptible TB.
- **New Cases Estimate Under Review -** The WHO report did **not** publish a fresh 2025 TB incidence estimate for India because new district-level sentinel surveillance data is still being reviewed and calibrated with Indian health bodies.
- **Incidence-** India reported **25.3 lakh** diagnosed/notified TB cases in 2025.
- Reporting more cases shows stronger detection and outreach, though total reported cases are different from the total number of new infections occurring across the whole population.
- **Strong Domestic Funding-** Around **96%** of India's TB programme funding came from domestic government resources, showing strong national ownership even as global TB financing faces shortfalls.

What is the current status?

Indicator	Progress & Status (up to 2025)
TB Mortality Rate	Down **38%** (28 to 18 per lakh; 2015–2025), beating the 35% global average
Treatment Success (Drug-Susceptible TB)	**94%** success rate
2025 Elimination Target	**Missed**
2025 Incidence Estimate	**Withheld / Under Review** (updated figures expected early 2027)
Global Burden & MDR-TB	~25% of global TB cases; among top high-burden countries for drug-resistant TB

What are the government initiatives driving the response?

- **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) -** India's flagship public health programme focused on finding cases early, providing free quality drugs, and supporting patients through treatment.
- **TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan -** An intensive nationwide screening and outreach drive that covered over **25 crore people**, carried out more than **11 crore chest X-rays** and **3 crore molecular tests**.
- It identified around **48.64 lakh TB cases** (including **14.97 lakh asymptomatic cases**) during the campaign window.
- **Community & Local Action -** Grassroots mobilization through community teams and local bodies such as Panchayats declared TB-free helps reduce stigma and bring testing closer to households.

What are the key challenges holding back elimination?

- **Undernutrition as a Major Driver -** Weak immunity from poor nutrition makes people far more likely to develop active TB and struggle during recovery.
- **Drug-Resistant TB -** India remains among the high-burden countries driving global multidrug-resistant/rifampicin-resistant TB (MDR/RR-TB).
- Resistant TB requires longer, more expensive, and tougher treatments, and incomplete courses fuel further resistance.
- **Crowded Living & Air Quality-** Overcrowded housing, poor ventilation, and indoor/outdoor air pollution increase the risk of airborne spread.
- **Social Stigma & Delayed Care-** Fear of social discrimination or lost daily wages can delay people from getting tested or completing their full course of medication.

What is the way forward?

- Pair medical treatment with sustained nutritional support, preventive therapy for high-risk contacts, and wider screening among vulnerable groups.
- Use validated field and sentinel surveillance data to track real transmission trends accurately and guide resources to high-burden districts.
- Expand rapid molecular testing and ensure uninterrupted drug supply and patient support so people complete treatment.
- Link TB control with better housing, ventilation, clean cooking fuel, and livelihood protection so families are not pushed deeper into poverty by illness.

Reference

[The Hindu | India missed its 2025 TB elimination target]



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