

## The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Thursday, 05 Sep , 2024

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The Union Health Ministry has proposed enhanced security measures for hospitals, including employing ex-servicemen and integrating with local police, following a recent consultation.

- This comes after the violent attack on a physician in Kolkata, aiming to improve safety for healthcare workers.

## Centre suggests measures to enhance security at hospitals

In letter to States, Health Ministry calls for recruitment of ex-servicemen, State security force personnel; it also advises background check of contract workers and sharing of video footage

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has suggested employing ex-servicemen as security personnel in hospital areas that have been identified as high-risk as one of the measures to enhance safety and security for doctors and healthcare workers. Manpower can also be engaged from State security forces, it said.

Following a recent consultation on hospital safety, the Health Ministry wrote to the Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories, detailing 11 measures that need to be implemented in line with a Supreme Court direction. Stakeholders have been directed to submit an action taken report by September 10.

Doctors across the country have demanded steps to ensure a safe workplace after the rape and murder of an on-duty post-graduate physician in Kolkata last month.



Central Industrial Security Force personnel walking past health workers inside a government hospital in Kolkata on Wednesday. AP

Each district must identify hospitals with a high footfall and consider them as high-priority establishments for security improvements, the Ministry said in its letter to States.

**Local police integration** Healthcare establishments have been directed to immediately initiate integration with local police and set up protocols to quickly share video footage of any

untoward incidents against healthcare workers, so that the police can facilitate a swift response and investigation.

The Ministry also mandated robust background checks for all outsourced personnel and contractual workers employed in hospitals.

**Bereavement protocols** Given that patient deaths can lead to high emotions

and tensions among grieving family members, all doctors and healthcare workers must be given proper training to handle such situations and bereavement protocols must be established, the Ministry said.

Other suggestions include security audits in consultation with local health and police authorities to assess and improve security measures; focusing on high-risk areas such as emergency rooms, triage areas, intensive care units, and labour rooms, where there is a higher incidence of security breaches; installation and proper functioning of CCTV cameras, particularly in high-risk areas, and the regular monitoring of these cameras from a manned-central control room.

"Healthcare establishments should have an internal security committee with active involvement of residents and students and have clear protocol for incidence response," the Ministry said.

### Measures suggested by the central government:

- **Employ Ex-Servicemen:** Use ex-servicemen and State security forces as security personnel in high-risk hospital areas to enhance safety.
- **Action Plan:** States and Union Territories must implement 11 safety measures and submit an action taken report by September 10, as directed by the Health Ministry.
- **Hospital Prioritization:** Identify hospitals with high footfall as high-priority for security improvements.
- **Local Police Integration:** Integrate with local police to share video footage of incidents promptly for swift responses and investigations.

## Daily News Analysis

- ▶ **Background Checks:** Conduct robust background checks for outsourced and contractual personnel in hospitals.
- ▶ **Bereavement Protocols:** Train healthcare workers to handle emotional situations and establish bereavement protocols to manage tensions among grieving families.
- ▶ **Security Audits:** Perform security audits with health and police authorities to assess and improve measures, focusing on high-risk areas like emergency rooms and ICUs.
- ▶ **CCTV Installation:** Ensure proper installation and functioning of CCTV cameras in high-risk areas, monitored from a central control room.
- ▶ **Internal Security Committee:** Establish an internal security committee in hospitals involving residents and students with clear incident response protocols..



ANIIDCO, a quasi-government agency in Port Blair, is responsible for a ₹72,000 crore infrastructure project in Great Nicobar.

- Despite its mandate for balanced development, ANIIDCO faces challenges including inadequate expertise, environmental governance issues, and conflicts of interest.

## What do we know about ANIIDCO?

Why has the qualifications of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation come into question after it got permission to do a ₹72,000 crore mega infrastructure project in Great Nicobar? Does the company have a proper internal environmental governance system?

### EXPLAINER

Pankaj Sekhsaria  
Rishika Pardikar

#### The story so far:

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) is the project proponent for the NITI Aayog-promoted ₹72,000 crore mega infrastructure project in Great Nicobar, the southernmost island in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago. The project entails the construction of a trans-shipment port, a greenfield airport, a tourism and township project and a solar and gas based power plant in Great Nicobar. ANIIDCO which has been granted permission for the mega project is a little known quasi-government agency based in Port Blair.

#### What do we know about ANIIDCO?

ANIIDCO was incorporated on June 28, 1988 under the Companies Act. Its objective is "to develop and commercially exploit natural resources for the balanced and environment friendly development of the territory." Its main activities, according to its website, include trading of petroleum products, Indian made foreign liquor and milk, managing tourism resorts and infrastructure development for tourism and fisheries. The company's average annual turnover and profit over the last three financial years has been ₹370 crore and ₹35 crore, respectively. The corporation's mandate, history, its structure and capabilities raise serious concerns about the process and possible outcomes of making them responsible for such a high profile, high investment and high risk project as the one in Great Nicobar. The 910 sq km island is not just a biodiversity hotspot but also home to indigenous communities with special rights and is also located in one of the most tectonically active zones.

When the Andaman and Nicobar administration appointed ANIIDCO as



Massive change: An aerial view of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. GETTY IMAGES

project proponent in July 2020, ANIIDCO neither had an environment policy nor an environment cell. It did not even have the human resources needed to oversee, let alone implement and monitor the project it was tasked to implement. It was only in late 2022 more than two years after it was made the project proponent did it start a process for recruiting people with relevant expertise such as urban planners, environmental planners, architects, infrastructure specialists, and legal and financial experts.

In May, 2021, the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) under the Union environment ministry had asked ANIIDCO a number of important questions about its internal environmental governance system. The EAC asked if ANIIDCO had a corporate environment policy approved by its board of directors, an

administrative system to ensure compliance with environmental clearance conditions and if there was a prescribed standard operating procedure to deal with environmental and forest violations. ANIIDCO admitted later in August that it did not have an environment policy. The EAC, nevertheless, went ahead and granted environmental clearance to ANIIDCO more than a year later in November 2022.

#### What are other conflicts of interests?

In 2022, the Mumbai based Conservation Action Trust had filed a petition before the National Green Tribunal challenging the Stage 1 forest clearance granted by the Union Environment Ministry. It had pointed out that at the time forest clearance was granted to ANIIDCO, the corporation's managing director was the

same person who was also the Commissioner cum Secretary (Environment and Forests) of the island.

It is clear, the petition noted, that this is "a case of the project proponent certifying itself." Further, it added that the responsibility to assess compliance with the Stage I forest clearance conditions vests with the same authority that has a responsibility to ensure compliance with the conditions. This same pattern was repeated when the Chief Secretary of the islands, who is also the chairman of the board of directors of ANIIDCO, was made a key member of the high powered committee set up by the NGT to look into complaints against the project. ANIIDCO was being allowed to evaluate its own actions again. Numerous persons employed at ANIIDCO in various capacities are currently civil servants with the Andaman and Nicobar administration in charge of environmental and tribal welfare issues. We sent questionnaires to both ANIIDCO and the chairman and secretary of the EAC. None responded.

#### What have past administrators said?

Lt Gen A.K. Singh, Lieutenant Governor of the islands from 2013-16, said that ANIIDCO would be better suited than any other department or organisation in the A&N administration to handle this mega project, though a project of this dimension would require expert agencies from outside the islands to execute it.

Sanat Kaul, chief secretary of the islands in the early 90s, had critiqued ANIIDCO's tourism operations in a book he wrote in 2015. On the current project, he said "I don't think ANIIDCO can at all manage a ₹72,000 crore project unless its upgraded vastly with much better quality staff. If the idea of the government is to use ANIIDCO because it is an existing company fully owned by the government, it will need a full revamp from what it was when I was there."

*Pankaj Sekhsaria is an author/editor with his recent work being The Great Nicobar Betrayal. Rishika Pardikar is a freelance environment reporter.*

### THE GIST

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) is the project proponent for the NITI Aayog-promoted ₹72,000 crore mega infrastructure project in Great Nicobar, the southernmost island in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.

Its main activities, according to its website, include trading of petroleum products, Indian made foreign liquor and milk, managing tourism resorts and infrastructure development for tourism and fisheries.

When the Andaman and Nicobar administration appointed ANIIDCO as project proponent in July 2020, ANIIDCO neither had an environment policy nor an environment cell. It did not even have the human resources needed to oversee, let alone implement and monitor the project it was tasked to implement.

### Information about ANIIDCO:

- Established on June 28, 1988, under the Companies Act.
- Based in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Engages in trading petroleum products, liquor, and milk.
- Manages tourism resorts and infrastructure development for tourism and fisheries.

**Mandate:**

- ▶ Develop and commercially exploit natural resources in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- ▶ Promote balanced and environment-friendly development.
- ▶ Focus on tourism, fisheries, and infrastructure projects.
- ▶ Support trading activities including petroleum products, liquor, and milk.

**Challenges faced:**

- ▶ Lacks an environmental policy and specialised human resources at the project's initiation.
- ▶ Faced delays in recruiting experts like urban planners and environmental specialists.
- ▶ Conflicts of interest emerged with officials involved in both project approval and oversight.
- ▶ Struggled with issues related to environmental governance and compliance.
- ▶ Encountered criticism regarding its capacity to handle the ₹72,000 crore project effectively.



In a world grappling with multiple crises, from pandemics to climate change, Stoicism offers a timeless approach to resilience and rational living.

- ➔ The philosophy's focus on controlling emotions and accepting what cannot be changed remains highly relevant today.



## In a time of turmoil and crisis, the stoic roadmap to a meaningful life

Several books on Stoicism, old and new, offer timeless wisdom on how to navigate life's challenges, cope with chaos and wrest happiness from adversity. By introducing this ancient philosophy, these books explain why it remains relevant for modern society

Soma Basu

**T**he world is in turmoil. We muddled through a pandemic, and continue to witness climate disruptions, rising inequalities, racial injustices, economic slowdowns, wars and uprising. The fear of loss and the greed for more keep lives on edge in a world where one crisis follows another.

The need for clarity and resilience to deal with hardships is felt like never before. In this scenario, can art of living strategies offered by Stoics help?

After Alexander the Great's conquests and death upended the Greek world, Hellenistic philosopher Zeno of Citium, propounded the development of logical living with reason as its decisive principle, where there is no space for exhibiting the pain one suffers.

Though Zeno's original writings are lost, his sayings are preserved by later writers and *Republic* is cited as the most famous work that outlined his vision of an ideal Stoic society. For example, Mr. Spock in the original Star Trek is a perfect example of a stoic person who tried to never demonstrate his feelings.

### Bandwidth of emotions

The philosophy is not just about 'unfeeling'. Between Prime Minister Modi's 'stoic silence' over ethnic violence in Manipur and wrestler Vinesh Phogat's 'stoic attitude' in proving herself whether on the mat or standing up against alleged sexual harassment, there is, for instance, a bandwidth of emotions that help us to understand universal truths about people and what makes them thrive in any

situation.

There's a hard path at any given moment in our lives that could benefit us as we either push through a current difficulty to build our character, or mull in the moment waiting for the experiences we live in to disappear, writes William Mulligan, founder of YouTube and Instagram account, Stoic Teachings, in his first book *The Everyday Stoic: Simple Rules For A Good Life* (2024).

"We all have our own philosophy. Maybe it's about how we treat people and allow others to treat us and how much negativity we let into ourselves," he says, explaining the Stoicism doctrine based on how to accept things that cannot be changed and not to brood over things beyond our control.

### Truths we have lost sight of

In a world full of darkness, books on Stoicism make for a transformative reading experience, equipping readers with insights into a more productive perspective of life. For beginners, reading the big three Roman philosophers – Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and Seneca – is a good way to cover the basics.

With *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus helps us to dive into human desires and calm rationality in order to cultivate a resilient mindset. It is an essential guide to enlightenment and emotional well-being. The free-minded writings of Seneca in his *Letters to Lucilius* discuss ethical theory and practical advice and how both are distinct and yet interdependent. He regards his philosophy as a balm for the wounds of life and suggests uprooting destructive passions.

While *Marcus' Meditations* is a personal collection of his reflections on applying stoic philosophy to his life and is one of the most widely-read classics on self-improvement, Donald Robertson uses anecdotes from Marcus' life in his book *How to Think like a Roman Emperor* (2019). Robertson's *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (2013) showcases how stoic philosophy is a form of self-help today.

In the context of people trying coping mechanisms to understand their place in the world and emerging strong, Vinesh Phogat is an example of a real Stoic. Academic philosopher John Sellars who is the chair of the Modern Stoicism organisation, has penned a good introduction, *Lessons in Stoicism: What Ancient Philosophers Teach Us About How to Live* (2020), that underlines the comeback of Stoicism as a fashionable buzzword.

### History as inspiration

Stoic philosophy started in 300 BC with Zeno of Citium and continued for 500 years until the fall of Rome; it evolved during the two crises and has had numerous revivals since, including Neo-stoicism in the Renaissance era and modern Stoicism in the 21st century.

A popular modern book on Stoicism is *The Daily Stoic* (2016) by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman, which draws on historical icons and contemporary heroes to demonstrate the power of owing our convictions and acting accordingly in an era of dishonesty. "Your values, your character and your deeds determine your success and legacy," Ryan writes, pointing out that the path to greatness is not

possible without goodness.

To make the 2000-year-old philosophy a framework to modern life, another good read is Victor Frankl's 1946 book, *Man's Search for Meaning* where he chronicles his experiences as a prisoner during World War II. He observes its impact on fellow inmates at a Nazi concentration camp; there were some who were able to connect to a purpose in life in such bleak times through completion of tasks, caring for another person or finding meaning in suffering with dignity.

In *A Guide to the Good life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (2009), William Irvine tells readers how to become thoughtful observers of their own life and identify the sources of distress, minimise worry, and let go of the past. Author and professor of Philosophy in City College of New York, Massimo Pigliucci's book *How to be a Stoic: using Ancient Philosophy to Live a Modern Life* (2017), reminds readers to look to history for inspiration and be surprised by its power.

In *How Should We Live?* (2015), cultural historian Roman Krznaric explores twelve topics including love, family, and empathy; work, time, and money to reveal how people have missed a chance to learn from the ancient Greeks. It is replete with ideas from the past and sheds light on the decisions we make in our daily lives.

As Gregory Hays, a classics scholar says, Stoicism, after all, is about being in control of one's thoughts and emotions. It is a recognition that human societies and relations are varied and complex and the path toward a better world goes through each of us.

### Stoicism

- **Origins:** Founded by Zeno of Citium around 300 BC, Stoicism is a Hellenistic philosophy emphasizing rationality and self-control.
- **Core Principles:** Focuses on living in harmony with nature and accepting things beyond one's control, while managing emotions through reason.
- **Major Figures:** Roman philosophers Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and Seneca are key contributors.
- **Key Texts:** Notable works include Epictetus' *The Enchiridion*, Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius*, and Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*.

### Philosophy:

- It emphasises rational control over one's emotions and acceptance of fate.
- It teaches that virtue, guided by reason, is the highest good and that individuals should focus on what they can control, accepting external events with equanimity.
- Stoicism advocates for resilience, self-discipline, and inner peace amidst life's challenges.

### Relevance in Today's Life

- **Coping Mechanism:** Offers strategies to manage stress and anxiety by focusing on what is within personal control and accepting what cannot be changed.
- **Emotional Resilience:** Encourages maintaining equanimity in the face of adversity and setbacks, fostering mental strength.
- **Practical Guidance:** Provides practical advice on dealing with modern challenges, such as uncertainty and ethical dilemmas, through reflection and rational thought.
- **Self-Improvement:** Promotes personal growth and ethical living by aligning actions with core values and principles, enhancing overall well-being..



India's shift to corn-based ethanol, driven by a hike in procurement prices, has turned India from a top corn exporter to a net importer.

# Ethanol push turns India into corn importer, shaking up global market

India appears set to become a permanent net importer of corn with the government promoting ethanol in gasoline to reduce carbon emissions; this has pushed ethanol distilleries to start using domestic corn produce, which has traditionally been absorbed by the poultry and starch industries

## NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters  
MUMBAI

**A** push by India to make more corn-based ethanol has turned Asia's top corn exporter into a net importer for the first time in decades, squeezing local poultry producers and scrambling global supply chains.

The jump in import demand comes after India in January hiked the procurement price of ethanol made from corn to drive a shift away from sugarcane-based ethanol for blending in gasoline.

With the government promoting ethanol in gasoline to reduce carbon emissions and trying to ensure ample supply of cheap sugar in the world's biggest market for the sweetener, India appears set to become a permanent net importer of corn.

The prospect of India ramping up corn imports is likely to support global prices which are trading near four-year lows.

Crushed by soaring feed costs as local corn prices rise far above global benchmarks, India's poultry producers want the government to remove duties on imports and lift its ban on genetically modified (GM) corn. The prohibition severely limits their buying



**Propping up:** The prospect of India ramping up corn imports is likely to support global prices which are trading at near four-year lows. REUTERS

options.

India usually exports 2 million to 4 million metric tons of corn, but in 2024, exports are expected to drop to 450,000 tons while the country is set to import a record 1 million tons, mainly from Myanmar and Ukraine, which grow non-GM corn, traders estimate.

Traditionally, the poultry and starch industries absorbed most of India's corn production of around 36 million tons.

Last year, however, ethanol distilleries started using corn, and their demand grew this year after the government abruptly curbed the use of sugarcane for fuel following a drought. That led to a shortfall of 5 million tons,



Now, the poultry and starch industries are battling with distilleries to get their share of supplies, and this fight is keeping prices high

**NITIN GUPTA**  
Senior vice president, Olam Agri India

an official with the All India Poultry Breeders Association said.

"Now, the poultry and starch industries are battling with distilleries to get their share of supplies, and this fight is keeping prices high," said Nitin Gupta, senior vice president of Olam Agri India.

Olam estimates ethanol distilleries will need 6 mil-

lion to 7 million tons of corn annually, demand that Mr. Gupta said can only be met with imports.

Looking to curb carbon emissions, India aims to increase the share of ethanol in gasoline to 20% by 2025-26, from 13% now.

To achieve its 20% blending target, India will need more than 10 billion litres of ethanol, government estimates show, which is double the volume the country produced in the marketing year ended October 2023.

### Crying foul

Rising corn prices are pushing poultry growers into the red, with feed accounting for three-fourths of production costs.

Uddhav Ahire, chair-

man of Anand Agro Group in the western city of Nashik, said the farm gate price of a broiler is about ₹75, but production costs have risen to ₹90.

"The poultry industry cannot sustain such losses for a prolonged period," he said.

The All India Poultry Breeders Association and the Compound Livestock Feed Manufacturers Association to demand 5 million tons of duty-free corn imports.

"Since there is a shortage, more corn imports should be allowed at zero duty," Mr. Ahire said. "The government should allow GM corn for feed purposes."

Corn imports attract a 50% import duty, while India allowed imports of around 500,000 tons at a concessional duty of 15%.

Lured by higher prices, farmers such as Krishna Shedge in Jalna district reduced soybean planting to expand the area under summer-sown corn, which has risen 7% from a year ago to 8.7 million hectares, farm ministry data showed. "Corn is giving good returns due to higher prices," he said.

But until prices decline with the arrival of new season supply, small poultry farmers like Vijay Patil have limited options including scaling back production and trimming the proportion of corn in feed.

"I'm substituting a small portion of corn with broken rice and wheat stalk waste to reduce feed costs," Patil said.

### Trade reversal

Booming Indian demand has lifted corn prices in Myanmar to around \$270 per metric ton, free on board (FOB), from around \$220, encouraging farmers to plant more.

"Exporters, farmers and other stakeholders in the supply chain have benefited from the rally in prices," said Murali Chakravarthy, country head for Singapore-based trading company Agropcorp in Yangon.

Imports from Myanmar are not subject to tax as it is categorised by India as a least developed country.

Meanwhile, starch makers are bringing in duty-free corn from Ukraine through India's Advance License Scheme, under which an equal amount of finished goods must be exported.

Ukraine's exports to India started rising from January and totalled around 400,000 tons by the end of August, estimates ASAP agricultural consultancy.

In the first half of this calendar year 2024 India's corn imports surged to 531,703 tons from just 4,981 tons a year earlier, while exports fell 87% from 1.8 million tons to 241,889 tons, trade ministry data showed.



- This change impacts local poultry producers, elevates global corn prices, and prompts calls for policy adjustments to address rising feed costs and import duties.

### Ethanol Shift and Import Dynamics

- India's increased focus on corn-based ethanol has turned it from Asia's top corn exporter into a net importer for the first time in decades.
- The government raised the procurement price of corn-based ethanol in January to encourage a shift from sugarcane-based ethanol, aimed at reducing carbon emissions and ensuring a steady sugar supply.
- India is set to become a permanent net importer of corn, supporting global prices that are currently near four-year lows.

### Impact on Local Industries

- Local poultry producers are struggling due to rising feed costs, with corn prices exceeding global benchmarks.
- They are advocating for the removal of import duties and lifting the ban on genetically modified (GM) corn, which limits their purchasing options.
- India's corn exports are expected to drop to 450,000 tons in 2024, while imports are projected to reach a record 1 million tons, primarily from Myanmar and Ukraine.

### Supply and Demand Imbalance

- The ethanol distilleries' demand for corn has surged, following a government decision to curb sugarcane use due to a drought, creating a 5 million-ton shortfall.
- Ethanol distilleries are estimated to need 6 to 7 million tons of corn annually, a demand that will likely be met through imports.

### Economic Impact and Adjustments

- The increase in corn prices has pushed poultry production costs higher, leading to financial strain for growers.
- Efforts to mitigate costs include substituting corn with cheaper alternatives in feed.
- Farmers are expanding corn cultivation due to higher prices, with a 7% increase in area under corn compared to last year.

### Trade and Price Adjustments

- Indian demand has driven up corn prices in Myanmar, benefiting local farmers and exporters.
- Starch producers are importing duty-free corn from Ukraine through India's Advance License Scheme.
- Overall, India's corn imports surged significantly in early 2024, while exports plummeted, reflecting the shift in trade dynamics.

## Tribe In News : Konyak Tribe

The Konyak Union, the apex body of the Konyak community, has sought the Nagaland government's intervention in rectifying the "erroneous" boundary line between the State's Mon district and Assam's Charaideo district on Google Maps.



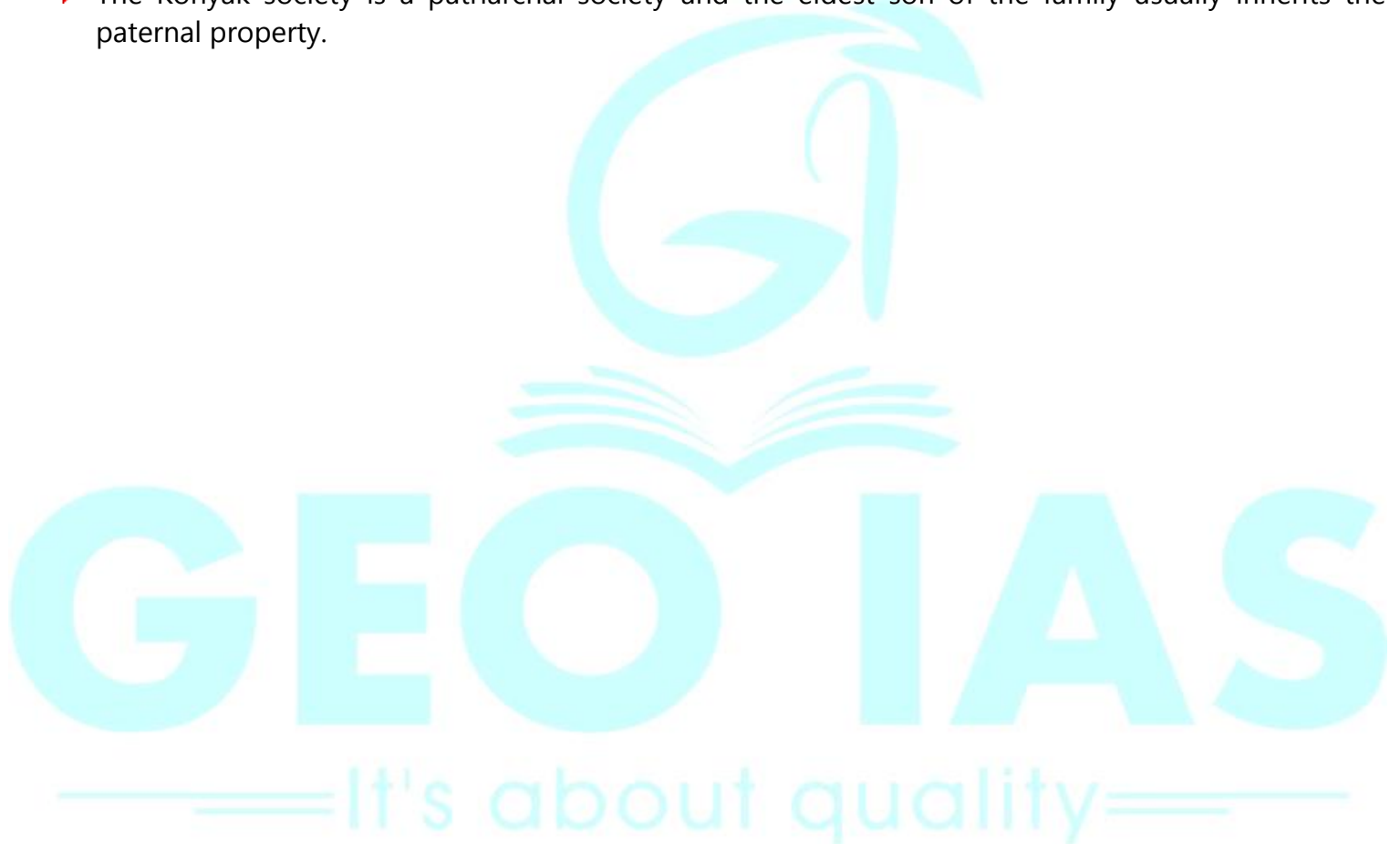
### About Konyak Tribe:

- The Konyaks can be found in the Mondistrict of Nagaland and also in the Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The term 'Konyak' is believed to have been derived from the words 'Whao' meaning 'head' and 'Nyak' meaning 'black' translating to 'men with black hair'.
- They can be grouped into two groups, namely "Thendu", which means the "Tattooed Face" and "Thenth", meaning the "White face".



## Daily News Analysis

- The Konyaks are of Mongoloid in origin and about 95% of the population follows the Christian faith now.
- Language: The Konyak language belongs to the Northern Naga sub-branch of the Sal subfamily of Sino-Tibetan.
- Festivals: Festivals occupy an important place in the lives of the Konyaks. The three most significant festivals were Aolingmonyu, Aonyimo and Laoun-ongmo.
- They are skilled in the art of making firearms. They are also skilled in handicrafts like basket making, cane and bamboo works, brass works etc.
- The Konyak society is a patriarchal society and the eldest son of the family usually inherits the paternal property.





# Gap between allocations for health, outcomes in States

The realisation of the full potential of the allocations in the Union Budget for the health sector hinges on many State-level parameters. Many of these allocations are for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), wherein the States not only share a substantial part of the cost but are also responsible for their implementation. The fiscal space and operational frameworks at the State-level have a strong bearing on the efficacy of the Budget allocations on such schemes.

Currently, two major CSS initiatives are being pursued by the central government to strengthen physical health infrastructure in States: the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), and Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME). The first is aimed at building health and wellness centres (AB-HWCs), developing block-level public health units (BPHUs), and having integrated district public health laboratories (IDPHLs) and critical care hospital blocks (CCHBs) in each district. The goal is to improve India's preparedness for future emergencies such as pandemics. The second initiative strives to scale up medical personnel by establishing new medical, nursing and paramedical colleges and also increasing seats in colleges. Another important aspect is to also strengthen and upgrade district hospitals and attach them to newly established medical colleges at the district level.

## Low fund utilisation

Estimates of central expenditure on these initiatives in the last three Budgets indicate a lacklustre performance in fund absorption. In PM-ABHIM, the ratio of 'Actual' expenditures to 'Budget Estimate' of the CSS component was only around 29% in 2022-23. In 2023-24, the 'Revised Estimate' was about 50% of the Budget Estimate, but is expected to be lower in the 'Actuals'. In HRHME too, the utilisation of funds was only

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Fiscal space and good operational frameworks at the State-level could make a difference to the efficacy of the Budget allocations for health schemes

around a quarter of the Budget estimates in both 2022-23 and 2023-24. Interestingly, perhaps due to low utilisation, the Budget allocations for both PM-ABHIM and HRHME have been slashed in the full Budget when compared to the interim Budget.

There could be several factors behind the low utilisation of funds under PM-ABHIM. First, in the AB-HWC component, around 60% of the resource envelope was to be sourced from the health grants recommended by the 15th Finance Commission, as in the scheme's operational guidelines. A recent study by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy indicates that only around 45% of the 15th Finance Commission health grants were utilised in the period 2021-22 to 2023-24. Discussions with State government officials indicate that the complex execution structure of these grants has posed hurdles in its utilisation. Second, in the component of IDPHLs, States were required to integrate public health laboratories under different vertical programmes to avoid duplication. This entailed extensive reorganisation of the existing implementing structure at the State-level, requiring significant planning, streamlining and coordinated efforts. Third, nearly all components, including the BPHUs and CCHBs, involve construction, where fund absorption is often delayed by rigid procedures. Overlap of funding from multiple sources for certain scheme components with similar activities has created an additional layer of complexity.

## Faculty shortage

Under the HRHME, even if allocations for physical infrastructure were better utilised, filling the sanctioned teaching faculty positions could have been challenging. According to a study by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), there is a shortage of over 40% in teaching faculty positions in 11 of the 18 newly

created All India Institutes of Medical Sciences in the country. It is even more alarming in State government medical colleges in Empowered Action Group States. As in a CSEP study, in Uttar Pradesh, where 17 government medical colleges were set up between 2019-21, 30% of the teaching faculty positions were vacant in 2022. The shortage of specialists could affect the task of setting up medical colleges or upgrading district hospitals to medical colleges. The challenge also extends to CCHBs under the PM-ABHIM whose guidelines on staffing norms include specialists. As in rural health statistics 2021-22, more than a third of the sanctioned positions of specialists in urban CHCs and two-thirds in rural CHCs were vacant in March 2022.

## Fiscal space in States

Notably, State governments will have to bear the recurring costs in maintaining the physical infrastructure built under the PM-ABHIM and HRHME, thus necessitating additional financial commitment. The Union government's support for human resources is only for the duration of the PM-ABHIM scheme, i.e., till 2025-26. The ability of States to plan and support recurring expenses beyond this period is vital for the productivity of the incurred capital expenditure. States need to create the fiscal space required to support these initiatives in addition to contributing to other CSS and their own State health schemes.

In sum, transforming capital expenditure allocations into effective health outcomes depends on several critical factors: the fiscal capacity of States to meet additional recurring expenditures; addressing underlying structural causes of human resource shortages, and improving public financial management processes for executing schemes and grants. These elements will be crucial in ensuring that the budgetary allocations for capital expenditures are productive.

## GS Paper 02 : Social Justice – Health

**(UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 : 2015)** Public health system has limitations in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that the private sector could help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives would you suggest? (150 w/10m)

**UPSC Mains Practice Question** Discuss the challenges faced by States in utilising budgetary allocations for health sector initiatives. Suggest measures to improve fund absorption and long-term sustainability. (250 w /15 m)

### Context :

- ▶ The article highlights the challenges faced by States in fully utilising Union Budget allocations for health sector initiatives, such as Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) and Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME).
- ▶ It emphasises the need for efficient fund absorption, addressing human resource shortages, and ensuring States' fiscal readiness to maintain infrastructure and manage long-term operational costs.

### Major Centrally Sponsored Schemes(CSS) initiatives

- ▶ Currently, two major CSS initiatives are being pursued by the central government to strengthen physical health infrastructure in States:
  - The Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM):
    - It is aimed at building health and wellness centres (AB-HWCs)
    - Developing block-level public health units (BPHUs)
    - Having integrated district public health laboratories (IDPHLs) and critical care hospital blocks (CCHBs) in each district
    - The goal is to improve India's preparedness for future emergencies such as pandemics
  - Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME):
    - It strives to scale up medical personnel by establishing new medical, nursing and paramedical colleges and also increasing seats in colleges
    - Another important aspect is to also strengthen and upgrade district hospitals and attach them to newly established medical colleges at the district level

### Concerns related to low fund utilisation

- ▶ Analysis of Estimates of central expenditure on these initiatives in the last three Budgets:
  - PM-ABHIM: The ratio of 'Actual' expenditures to 'Budget Estimate' of the CSS component was only around 29% in 2022-23. In 2023-24, the 'Revised Estimate' was about 50% of the Budget Estimate, but is expected to be lower in the 'Actuals'.
  - HRHME: The utilisation of funds was only around a quarter of the Budget estimates in both 2022-23 and 2023-24

### Factors behind the low utilisation of funds under PM-ABHIM

- ▶ Low utilisation of budget in the AB-HWC component: 60% of the resources were meant to come from 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission health grants. However, a study shows only 45% of these grants were utilized between 2021-22 and 2023-24, with State officials citing complex execution structures as a key obstacle.
- ▶ Dodging duplication: In the IDPHLs component, States had to integrate public health labs across various programs to avoid duplication, necessitating significant reorganization, planning, and coordination at the State level.

- Procedural delays in all components: like BPHUs and CCHBs, involve construction, where fund absorption is often delayed by strict procedures. Overlapping funding from multiple sources for similar activities adds further complexity.

### Concerns related to faculty shortage

- Challenges in filling vacancies: Under the HRHME, even if allocations for physical infrastructure were better utilized, filling the sanctioned teaching faculty positions could remain challenging.
- Shortages of teachers in AIIMS: A study by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) reveals a 40% shortage of teaching faculty in 11 of the 18 newly created All India Institutes of Medical Sciences.
- State's medical college situation: The situation is more critical in State government medical colleges in Empowered Action Group States. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, 30% of teaching faculty positions were vacant in 2022 at 17 new government medical colleges set up between 2019-21.
- Need for specialist: This shortage of specialists could impact efforts to establish or upgrade medical colleges and district hospitals.
- Severe gaps in Rural positions: The challenge also affects CCHBs under PM-ABHIM, where staffing norms require specialists. According to rural health statistics for 2021-22, over a third of specialist positions in urban CHCs and two-thirds in rural CHCs were vacant as of March 2022.

### Concerns regarding the fiscal space of the states

- There is a need for a better managing of financial responsibilities and future planning to address the below concerns:
  - Recurring Costs for states: State governments will be responsible for the recurring costs of maintaining the physical infrastructure built under PM-ABHIM and HRHME, necessitating additional financial commitment.
  - Support from the Union Government: The Union government's support for human resources under PMABHIM is limited to the duration of the scheme, which runs until 2025-26.
  - Ensuring a long-term planning: States must plan and support recurring expenses beyond this period to ensure the productivity of the capital expenditure.
  - Crating the fiscal space: States need to create the necessary fiscal space to support these initiatives, in addition to contributing to other Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and their own State health schemes.

### Conclusion

- The effectiveness of capital expenditure allocations in the health sector depends on:
  - The fiscal capacity of States to manage additional recurring expenditures.
  - Addressing structural issues such as human resource shortages.
  - Improving public financial management for executing schemes and grants.
  - These factors are critical to ensuring the productivity of budgetary allocations and achieving better health outcomes.



### **About the two major Centrally Sponsored initiatives**

- ▶ Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM): Focuses on improving health infrastructure through health and wellness centres (AB-HWCs), block-level public health units (BPHUs), district public health laboratories (IDPHLs), and critical care hospital blocks (CCHBs).
- ▶ Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME): Aims to boost medical personnel by building new medical, nursing, and paramedical colleges, increasing seats, and upgrading district hospitals to medical colleges.

### **How can states work on Fiscal space? (Way forward)**

- ▶ Enhanced Budget Planning and Allocation: States should prioritize and allocate funds efficiently for health infrastructure and recurring costs.
- ▶ Strengthening Revenue Generation: States can explore increasing their own revenue sources through improved tax collection, introducing new revenue streams, or enhancing public-private partnerships.
- ▶ Optimizing Expenditure Management: Implementing better financial management practices, such as cost control measures, transparent procurement processes, and efficient use of existing resources, can help in managing and maximizing the impact of budget allocations for health infrastructure and services.