

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

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Page 01 : GS 2 : International relations

India is being encouraged by Ukraine to join the Swiss peace process on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, despite initially disassociating from the June summit.

- ▶ Ukraine seeks India's active role in peace-building efforts, with upcoming discussions and diplomatic visits highlighting this engagement.

## Ukraine hopes that India will 'review' its decision on joining the Swiss peace process, says Ambassador

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

As the Union government looks at a possible role for India in ending the Russia-Ukraine war, Kyiv is keen on getting New Delhi to sign the Swiss peace summit document. After the summit in June, India had issued a statement disassociating itself from its outcome as it did not involve Russia and Ukraine.


Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ukraine's Ambassador to India Oleksandr Polishchuk said that Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had proposed a retrospective move by India to join the peace process ahead of plans for a second peace summit in October or November. Uk-

raine, he said, had more "ambition" for India than playing "post office" between the leaders of the two warring nations.

"We hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Ukraine and conversations with President Zelenskyy indicate India's support for the peace-building effort," Mr. Polishchuk told *The Hindu*.

He confirmed that Mr. Zelenskyy "discussed the possibility that India could review its decision at the first peace summit in Switzerland, and associate itself with the Burgenstock joint communique", retrospectively or for India to formulate its own proposals that support principles such as humanitarian access and nuclear safety.



 We hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Ukraine and conversations with President Zelenskyy indicate India's support for the peace-building effort

**OLEKSANDR POLISHCHUK**  
Ukraine's Ambassador to India

"A large democracy like India should not just be a messenger or post office, conveying messages from one country in the conflict to the other – given PM Modi's ability to speak to all sides, he can play a larger role in guiding the process and even in hosting the peace summit," he added.

The envoy's comments

come as the Modi government has stepped up its outreach to other countries playing a role in current efforts to end the conflict.

### Flurry of visits

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is on a visit to Saudi Arabia, Germany and Switzerland from September 8 to 13 when he will

engage Ministers of West Asian nations and heads of UN organisations.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval will visit Russia from September 10 to 12 for the BRICS NSA meetings where he will meet counterparts from China, Brazil, South Africa, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Ethiopia. The flurry of diplomatic visits comes after Mr. Zelenskyy pitched India as a possible mediator along with other "Global South" countries and Mr. Putin said he valued any efforts by India, China and Brazil on the conflict.

"We need to pay more attention to the implementation of the various plans for cooperation that the leaders agreed to," Mr. Polishchuk said.

### Swiss Peace Process:

- ▶ The Swiss peace process refers to diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict through negotiations and dialogue, with Switzerland serving as a neutral ground.
- ▶ Initiated in June, the process seeks to facilitate a comprehensive peace agreement by engaging key international stakeholders.
- ▶ The first summit, held in Switzerland, produced a joint communique outlining principles for humanitarian access and nuclear safety but did not involve direct participation from Russia and Ukraine.
- ▶ The upcoming second summit, scheduled for October or November, aims to build on these discussions, with efforts to incorporate broader support and proposals from influential global players, including India.
- ▶ The goal is to foster a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict.

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques : The Russia-Ukraine war is not only causing harm to the economies of these two countries but has a wider implication for the present world order. Discuss.**



A young male patient, who recently returned to India from a country with active Mpox transmission, has been identified as a suspected Mpox case, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

- The Ministry did not release details about the case or the place of occurrence, but maintained that the patient has been isolated in a designated hospital, where his condition is reported to be stable. Samples have been collected from the patient to confirm whether he has contracted Mpox.
- This is the second time mpox has received this designation in two years, with over 99,000 cases and 208 deaths reported across 116 countries since 2022.

## Patient with Mpox symptoms isolated, says Health Ministry

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

A young male patient, who recently returned to India from a country with active Mpox transmission, has been identified as a suspected Mpox case, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The Ministry did not release details about the case or the place of occurrence, but maintained that the patient has been isolated in a designated hospital, where his condition is reported to be stable. Samples have been collected from the patient to confirm whether he has contracted Mpox.

“The development of this case is consistent with the earlier risk assessment



**Exercising caution:** The government has advised patients to seek medical help if any symptoms are seen. AFP

Centre for Disease Control] NCDC and there is no cause of any undue concern,” the Ministry said.

In the Ministry statement, Prashant Joshi, Executive Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Nagpur, explained that the

ciated with Mpox can also be confused with other common diseases

Mr. Joshi advised patients to seek medical help if the mentioned symptoms are seen, along with a travel history to endemic areas or contact with a suspected or confirmed case

### Analysis of News:

#### What are Zoonotic diseases?

- These are infections that are spread between people and animals.
- These infections are caused by germs, such as viruses, bacteria, parasites, and fungi.

- Some can be severe and life-threatening, such as rabies, and others may be milder and get better on their own.

### What is Mpox?

- Mpox is a viral infection caused by the mpox virus (MPXV), characterized by symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle aches, and pox-like rashes.
- Although usually self-limiting, it can be fatal in vulnerable populations, particularly children and those with weakened immune systems.
- Historically confined to Africa, the infection has recently spread globally.

**WHAT IS MPOX?**  
(Formerly called monkeypox)  
Mpox is a viral infection transmitted during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex.

### MPOX SYMPTOMS LAST 2-4 WEEKS



High Fever



Intense Headache



Swollen Lymph Nodes



Muscle Aches



Chills



Rash



Anyone can get mpox, but certain populations are at higher risk and should take precautions and consider vaccination.

### Current Concerns

- The main concern arises from the spread of a more virulent strain of the virus, clade 1b, which is now being transmitted primarily through sexual contact—a departure from the traditional zoonotic transmission observed with other mpox clades.
- Over 100 cases of clade 1b have been reported in countries neighboring the DRC, indicating a worrying trend that requires a coordinated international response.

### Global and Indian Risks

- The rapid spread of this new clade has led to global concerns, with cases reported outside Africa, including Sweden.
- India, which saw cases during the 2022 outbreak, remains at risk, especially with international travel being a factor in spreading the virus.
- WHO has highlighted the need for urgent action to prevent a repeat of the global outbreak seen in 2022.

### Vaccine Availability

- ▶ There are two vaccines currently recommended by WHO for mpox.
- ▶ WHO's recent Emergency Use Listing for these vaccines aims to improve access, particularly in lower-income countries.
- ▶ Efforts are ongoing to coordinate vaccine distribution and ensure equitable access globally.
- ▶ India has also been involved in manufacturing vaccines and diagnostics in response to the previous outbreak.

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2014

**Ques : Consider the following diseases-**

1. Diphtheria
2. Chickenpox
3. Smallpox

**Which of the above diseases has/have been eradicated in India?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) None

**Ans : b)**

China's announcement to advance its Tianwen-3 Mars sample-return mission to 2028 highlights its commitment to planetary protection principles, which aim to prevent contamination of Earth and other celestial bodies.

**WHAT IS IT?**

## Planetary protection: keeping out 'toxic aliens'

**Vasudevan Mukunth**

In space missions from the earth to another planetary body, planetary protection is the idea that it's important to preserve the biospheres of the earth and the body against contamination by "alien" microbial life.

It's an important principle of interplanetary missions, such as from the earth to the moon or Mars. It stems from the idea that we ought to keep the planetary biosphere "pristine" and from being "corrupted" by influences that may not exist had the space mission not been undertaken.

On September 5, China announced it would be pulling up the date for Tianwen-3, its ambitious Mars sample-return mission, to 2028, potentially ahead of the U.S. During the announcement, the mission's designer said it would abide by the planetary protection principle.

The principle has a legal basis in Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty (1967). It states that parties to the treaty explore outer space while avoiding "harmful contamination and ... adverse changes" in the earth's and the body's environments due to "the introduction of extraterrestrial matter."

An important way to "clean"



A model of NASA's Viking 1 lander, which became the first spacecraft to land on Mars in 1976. It was designed and operated to facilitate planetary protection. FILE PHOTO

spacecraft ahead of interplanetary missions to conform to the planetary protection principle is to fully assemble the vehicle and bake it in a dry room for three days at 120 degrees C. This increases the costs and the technical strength of the spacecraft, but such are the demands of keeping biospheres 'clean'.



**For feedback and suggestions**  
for 'Science', please write to  
**science@thehindu.co.in**  
with the subject 'Daily page'

► This is guided by international space treaties and involves rigorous spacecraft sterilisation.

### Planetary Protection Principle:

- Planetary protection refers to the measures and principles aimed at preventing biological contamination of both Earth and other celestial bodies during space missions.
- It seeks to preserve the integrity of planetary environments by ensuring that spacecraft do not introduce extraterrestrial life to Earth or Earth-originating life to other planets.
- This principle is guided by Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty (1967), which mandates that space exploration should avoid harmful contamination and adverse changes to planetary environments.
- To adhere to these standards, spacecraft undergo rigorous sterilisation procedures, such as high-temperature baking, to minimise microbial contamination before interplanetary missions.
- This process is crucial for maintaining scientific accuracy and safeguarding extraterrestrial ecosystems.

<b>Outer Space Treaty</b> <small>Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies</small> <b>1967</b>	<b>Registration Convention</b> <small>Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space</small> <b>1976</b>	<b>Moon Treaty</b> <small>Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies</small> <b>1979</b>	<b>Artemis Accords</b> <small>Principles for Cooperation in the Civil Exploration and Use of the Moon, Mars, Comets, and Asteroids for Peaceful Purposes</small> <b>2020</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Space should be:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible to all countries</li> <li>• Free from national claims of ownership</li> <li>• Explored guided by principles of cooperation and mutual assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ States are liable for non-governmental entities and their activities in space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Builds upon Article VIII of the Outer Space Treaty, which calls for space objects and its component parts to be returned to the state if such objects are found beyond the limits of the State of registry</li> <li>❖ Parties to the convention are required to establish and maintain national registries on their space objects and to provide this information to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ States that the Moon and its natural resources are the common heritage of mankind</li> <li>❖ Puts forward the formation of an international regime to govern the exploitation of such resources as resource exploitation becomes feasible</li> <li>❖ Rejected by the US, citing the Moon Treaty as an "attempt at constraining free enterprise"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Principles for cooperation between the US and other Artemis program participants grounded in the Outer Space Treaty</li> <li>❖ Signed by Australia, India, the Netherlands, Romania, Saudi Arabia, and France, which are all also signatories/parties to the Moon Treaty</li> <li>❖ Affirms individual states' right to engage space with the private sector</li> </ul>

### Outer Space Treaty (1967)

- **Date:** Signed on January 27, 1967; entered into force on October 10, 1967.
- **Participants:** Initiated by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom; later ratified by many other countries.
- **Purpose:** Establishes the framework for international space law and promotes peaceful use of outer space.

### Key Provisions

- **Non-Appropriation:** Outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, cannot be claimed by any nation.
- **Peaceful Use:** Outer space shall be used for peaceful purposes, and space activities should benefit all humankind.



- **No Weapons:** Prohibits placing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in space.
- **International Cooperation:** Encourages international cooperation in space exploration and activities.

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2016

**Ques : Mars sample-return mission Consider the following statements:**

**The Mangalyaan launched by ISRO**

1. is also called the Mars Orbiter Mission
2. made India the second country to have a spacecraft orbit the Mars after USA
3. made India the only country to be successful in making its spacecraft orbit the Mars in its very first attempt

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (c)**

**Page 11 : GS 3 : Environment : Climate Change – Effects of Climate change**

This news discusses a study highlighting the link between declining Arctic sea ice and India's unpredictable monsoon patterns.

- It reveals how reduced sea ice levels, driven by climate change, affect atmospheric systems, leading to erratic rainfall, droughts, and floods, posing significant challenges for India's weather forecasting and climate resilience.



**Erratic climate:** The view from YSR Colony in Vijayawada on September 8. G. N. RAO

## How changes in the level of Arctic sea ice can change monsoon patterns in India

Unpredictable, erratic rainfall has become the norm for the Indian monsoon. New research reveals that less sea ice in the central Arctic leads to lower rain in western and peninsular India but more rain in central and northern India

**Arkatapa Basu**

Yadav, Juhi et al, 'Contrasting response of regional spring Arctic Sea ice variations on Indian summer monsoon rainfall', *Remote Sensing of Environment*, Vol 311, September 1, 2024.

**I**ncessant rainfall has wreaked havoc in India's southeast, leaving at least 17 dead in Andhra Pradesh and thousands homeless and at the mercy of floods in Telangana. The Indian Meteorological Department has also warned of heavy rains in parts of Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi.

Unpredictable, erratic rainfall has become the norm for the Indian monsoon. Once a bringer of relief and hope to the subcontinent, these rains are now a herald of drought and floods.

Climate change is an important reason why. However, a closer look into climate models shows the intricate play of surface temperature, pressure gradients, air currents and even sea ice that is responsible for bringing rain to the Indian landmass. In a study published in the journal *Remote Sensing of Environment* in June, researchers from India's National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and South Korea's Korea Polar Research Institute have found that seasonal changes in the Arctic sea ice affect the Indian monsoon as well.

**Making of a monsoon**

The Indian summer monsoon rainfall (ISMRF) over the Indian subcontinent, from July to September, and with most of the rains recorded in July and August, is one of the most prominent monsoon systems in the world.

In summer months, sunlight warms the

Central Asian and Indian landmass more and faster than the surrounding ocean. This creates a low pressure band at the Tropic of Cancer called the intertropical convergence zone. Trade winds blowing from the southeast are subsequently deflected towards the Indian landmass due to the Coriolis force and have low pressure after they cross the equator. As they blow over the Arabian Sea, the winds pick up moisture and deposit that as rain over India.

Over the landmass itself, this southwest monsoon splits into two. The Arabian Sea arm brings rain to the west coast while the other arm travels to the Bay of Bengal and brings rain to India's eastern and northeastern parts. The arms finally converge over Punjab and Himachal Pradesh as the Arabian Sea arm moves inward and the Bay of Bengal arm moves along the Himalaya.

The ISMR is much more complex than scientists first anticipated. In the last two decades, climate models have shown that the surface temperatures of the Indian, the Atlantic, and the Pacific Oceans affect the ISMR. The circum-global teleconnection (CGT), a large-scale atmospheric wave flowing at the mid-latitudes, seemed to significantly influence the monsoon as well.

**The influence of Arctic sea ice**

In recent years, scientists have also suggested that the declining levels of Arctic sea ice, due to climate change, could influence the monsoon's temperament. In the new study, researchers used observational data from 1980 to 2020 and climate models (specifically Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phases 5 and 6) to check how Arctic sea ice levels affect atmospheric circulations that in turn

influence the ISMR.

The results revealed distinct and at times contrasting patterns. According to the paper, less sea ice in the central Arctic leads to lower rain in western and peninsular India but more rain in central and northern India. On the other hand, lower sea ice levels in the upper latitudes, particularly in the Barents-Kara Sea region encompassing the Hudson Bay, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Sea of Okhotsk, delay the monsoon's onset and render it more unpredictable.

Several atmospheric systems also influence this pattern. The scientists found that when sea ice levels in the central Arctic increase, the heat transferred from the ocean to the atmosphere triggers a cyclonic circulation at slightly lower latitudes, like in the north Atlantic. This bolsters the Rossby waves, fast-flowing streams of air high in the atmosphere created by the earth's rotation and differences in temperature and weather systems that move west to east. "To put it simply, imagine giant loops in a river of air high above us. These loops can push warm or cold air across the planet and steer storms around, changing weather patterns as they go," Avinash Kumar, an NCPOR scientist and one of the study's co-authors, told *The Hindu*. The enhanced Rossby waves result in high pressure over northwest India and low pressure over the Mediterranean region. This in turn strengthens a narrow, concentrated band of wind, called the Asian jet stream, over the Caspian Sea, causing the subtropical easterly jet – a jet stream blowing over the Indian subcontinent during summer – to shift northward. As a result, an anomalous high pressure region is created over Central Asia, disrupting atmospheric stability over the Indian landmass and

bringing more rain over western and peninsular India.

On the other hand, low sea ice over the Barents-Kara Sea region triggers a series of air currents that produce an anomalous high pressure over southwest China. This correlates with a positive Arctic Oscillation – high pressure over the northern Atlantic and Pacific oceans along with a weakening of the CGT, which connects weather events in different parts of the world.

As sea ice levels decrease in the region, heat rises from the Barents-Kara sea, creating an anticyclonic circulation (calm, clear skies) over northwest Europe. This disturbs the upper atmospheric region over subtropical Asia and India.

This instability, coupled with high surface temperature of the Arabian Sea and the moisture picked up from the surrounding water bodies promotes high rainfall over northeastern India while leaving central and northwest regions of the country without much.

**Does climate change also play a role?**

Now that scientists know a little more about the forces that conspire to bring or withhold rain over India, what can we say about the role of climate change?

"Climate change, by accelerating the reduction of Arctic sea ice, exacerbates the variability and unpredictability of the ISMR," Dr. Kumar said. "Lower Arctic sea ice can lead to more frequent and severe droughts in some regions while causing excessive rainfall and flooding in others."

Apart from highlighting the physical pathways in which the Arctic sea ice affects the Indian monsoon, the current study shows the urgent need to expand research on climate dynamics and for scientists to prepare more accurate forecasts of the ever-changing monsoons.

### Impact of Arctic Sea Ice on the Indian Monsoon:

### ➔ Introduction to the Indian Monsoon

- In recent years, erratic and unpredictable rainfall has plagued the Indian monsoon, causing droughts and floods.
- Climate change is a significant driver, but a complex interaction of multiple climatic factors also contributes to these changes.
- A new study, published in Remote Sensing of Environment by Juhi Yadav et al., from the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), and South Korea's Korea Polar Research Institute, reveals that seasonal variations in Arctic sea ice also impact the Indian summer monsoon rainfall (ISMR).
- Various studies suggest that the declining Arctic sea ice due to climate change affects the ISMR.

### ➔ Mechanics of the Indian Summer Monsoon

- The ISMR, active from July to September, is one of the world's most notable monsoon systems, responsible for bringing significant rainfall to the Indian subcontinent.
- As the summer months approach, the Central Asian and Indian landmass heats up more rapidly than the surrounding oceans.
- This creates a low-pressure zone, which pulls in moisture-laden winds from the ocean.
- The southwest monsoon, after crossing the equator, splits into two arms: one brings rain to India's western coast via the Arabian Sea, while the other impacts the eastern and northeastern regions from the Bay of Bengal.
- The ISMR system is more complex than initially thought, influenced by ocean surface temperatures, pressure gradients, atmospheric waves, and the circum-global teleconnection (CGT), a wave pattern in the mid-latitudes.

### Findings of the Study

#### ➔ Central Arctic Sea Ice Impact:

- Reduced sea ice in the central Arctic leads to less rainfall over western and peninsular India but increases rainfall in central and northern regions.

#### ➔ Barents-Kara Sea Region Impact:

- Low sea ice in the Barents-Kara Sea region delays the monsoon's onset and makes it more unpredictable, impacting rainfall patterns.

### Atmospheric Systems Influencing Monsoon Patterns

#### ➔ Rossby Waves and Their Effect:

- When sea ice in the central Arctic increases, heat transfers from the ocean to the atmosphere, triggering cyclonic circulation in lower latitudes.

- This strengthens Rossby waves, which influence weather patterns globally. The Rossby waves enhance high pressure over northwest India and low pressure over the Mediterranean, affecting the subtropical easterly jet over India.
- This results in an anomalous high-pressure system over Central Asia, causing more rain over western and peninsular India.
- ➔ **Barents-Kara Sea Ice Decline:**
  - Low sea ice in the Barents-Kara region triggers high pressure over southwest China and leads to a positive Arctic Oscillation.
  - The reduced sea ice also leads to anticyclonic circulation over northwest Europe, disturbing atmospheric stability in subtropical Asia and India.
  - This results in high rainfall over northeastern India but drier conditions in central and northwest India.

### The Role of Climate Change

- ➔ Climate change has intensified the reduction of Arctic sea ice, exacerbating the variability and unpredictability of the ISMR.
- ➔ As sea ice levels continue to drop, more frequent and severe droughts, alongside excessive rainfall and flooding, are likely in different regions of India.
- ➔ The study underscores the importance of Arctic sea ice in influencing global climate systems, with direct effects on the Indian monsoon.

### Conclusion

- ➔ The findings highlight the intricate relationship between Arctic sea ice and the Indian monsoon, showcasing how far-reaching the effects of sea ice loss can be.
- ➔ The study emphasises the need for more extensive research into these climate dynamics and the necessity for accurate forecasts to anticipate monsoon variability in the future.

**UPSC Mains PYQ : 2017**

**Ques : What characteristics can be assigned to a monsoon climate that succeeds in feeding more than 50 percent of the population residing in Asia?**

## Term In News : INDIAsize Initiative

The government will soon roll out the much-awaited 'INDIAsize' initiative, the Union Textiles Minister said recently.



### About INDIAsize Initiative:

- It is an initiative of the Ministry of Textiles which aims to establish standardized measurements designed to better suit Indian body types.
- Need:
- Presently, international and domestic brands available in India use measurements from the US or the UK for garments, having 'small', 'medium' and 'large' sizes.
- However, Western body types differ from Indians in terms of height, weight, or specific measurements of body parts.
- It fails to account for the diversity in Indian body types, leading to frequent fitting issues and consumer dissatisfaction.
- The Ministry of Textiles sanctioned the INDIAsize project to develop standard body sizes for the Indian apparel sector to address the prevailing disparities and inconsistencies in provided fits.

## Daily News Analysis

- The project entails gathering anthropometric data pan India from more than 25000 (Twenty-Five Thousand) male and female persons between the age group of 15 years and 65 years using human safe 3D whole body scanning technology.
- The created body size chart will help national and international retailers and manufacturers to produce goods which are best suited for Indian body types and create a balance between demand and supply of well fitted garments.
- Once rolled out, INDIAsize will serve as a benchmark for Indian and international fashion brands selling in the country.



# Policy paralysis, a weakened public health sector



**Mathew George**

Head of the Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, Kerala

**T**he public health needs of a population are diverse and perception and prioritisation vary across the social strata. Public health policies are those decisions made by the government based on the resources available to address people's health needs. Public health needs include those felt by people (felt needs) based on their lived experiences and those projected upon (projected needs) them by experts – the architects of public health policies. The recent Union Budget has been critiqued for its inadequate focus on the social sector, specifically the public health sector. Public health policies of the government in the last decade indicate that there has been a severe paralysis when it comes to public health policies without any real prescription that addresses the felt needs of people.

### Felt needs in public health

Public health needs can be broadly categorised into three groups: First, are the diseases of poverty such as tuberculosis, malaria, undernutrition, maternal death, bouts of illnesses due to food and water-borne infections leading to typhoid, hepatitis, and diarrhoeal diseases faced by the poor and the vulnerable. These problems attain greater significance as attempts to prevent these also pose challenges of addressing livelihood and are non-negotiable from a rights perspective.

Second are the problems of the middle class and those better off on issues that are related to environmental pollution – air, water, waste management, lack of drainage facility and failure to ensure healthy foods and eateries that pose threat to everyday lives, most of which are due to poor infrastructure development and poor market regulations. The list goes on if we add road traffic accidents, climate change and the rise of chronic illnesses. These are also applicable to the first group but may not figure within the hierarchy of priorities.

Third, and the most popular needs in public health, are the curative care needs of a population. Provisioning of curative care is the most critical and controversial policy question in public health. The three levels of curative care envisaged are primary, secondary and tertiary. The poor and the vulnerable rely on primary health-care institutions of the public sector for primary-level care, as it is the most affordable and is closer to their places of residence. Secondary-level care was historically neglected and is still inadequate against population norms. Shortage of infrastructure including health professionals in these facilities aggravates the problem. Tertiary-care needs for curative care among the poor are the focus of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) under Ayushman Bharat.

A history of Indian public health policies in the last decade shows that the National Rural Health

Mission, which was started in 2005, and followed by the National Health Mission (NHM) of 2013, were a clear departure from the then existing National Health Policy of 2002, which proposed the commercialisation of health care. It was the NHM's focus on strengthening public sector health care through architectural correction that has revived an otherwise sinking health system after the reform period of the 1990s. Efforts were taken to follow the principles of primary health care while strengthening the institutions of primary health care by implementing the national health programmes through them, thus building goodwill and trust among the people about public sector health care. This was obvious from the health infrastructure available in India, which was reported as 1,53,655 sub centres, 25,308 primary health centres (PHC) and 5,396 community health centres (CHC) as per the rural health statistics, 2015. The impetus created by NHM would have been capitalised had subsequent policies strengthened the secondary- and tertiary-level health care in the public sector. Instead, the focus has shifted entirely on publicly funded health insurance schemes (PFHI) such as the PMJAY under Ayushman Bharat since 2018. PFHI schemes were implemented by the governments of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and others as an add-on to the overall strengthening efforts under the NHM then.

### Private health care, the real beneficiary

The real beneficiary of PFHI schemes in the Indian context is private sector health care. First, a health insurance cover ideally implies covering all health-care expenses, globally. It is unique that India's health insurance scheme covers only hospitalisation expenses under the scheme. This is based on the market logic that if 50 crore people (12 crore households are the beneficiaries of PMJAY) are enrolled in the scheme; only 2.5 crore people will have an actual need for hospitalisation annually as per epidemiological data.

Further, the outsourcing of secondary and tertiary-care services to the private sector at market rates under the scheme is an open acknowledgement by the government of its failure and a lack of intention to strengthen secondary- and tertiary-level public sector health care in the country. The implication is that the remaining 100 crore population who are not covered under any government schemes are forced to have highly commercialised medical care for their illnesses, incurring an expenditure at market rates. Thus, by monopolising the market for health care, private hospitals pretend to offer services to the government at market rates, at the same time ensuring that the remaining two-thirds of the population must depend on them by making sure that public sector health care is weakened.

Primary care is weak while there has been a boost to the growth of the private sector in secondary and tertiary care

The last nail in the coffin of the public health system is the recent transformation of sub centres, PHCs and CHCs into health and wellness centres (HWC) in February 2018. The highlight was to declare that 1,50,000 HWCs were established as new institutions in rural areas, when numbers more than that were already in existence (RHS 2015). The proposal was to have a community health officer, expected to render treatment to a rural population by completing a bridge course. This has transformed the original mandate of sub centres from rendering outreach activity to that which provides curative care. Doctoring gained its acceptance through its act of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. Instead, the proposal to equip a community health officer to practise medicine minimally results in the new professional becoming a dignified chemist. The failure to offer curative care in its entirety by any institution will shatter the trust of people in those institutions.

The latest of this was in a 2023 directive to rename all the HWCs (sub centres, PHC and CHC) to 'Ayushman Arogya mandir'. One could not find any clear justifications for this name change. Several questions arise on how this name is of significance to a non-Hindi speaking population. How does the term mandir resonate as the title of a secular health institution?

### Threat to public health system

Public health challenges are diverse in a country such as India and there is a need to address these across social groups without fail. For the vulnerable and the poor, prevention programmes and health promotion activities become a luxury when their day-to-day livelihoods are not addressed. It is basic primary- and secondary-level curative care that are their felt needs in public health. Historically, institutions of primary health care were entrusted with this responsibility and were delivering preventive and promotion activities close to their home, by making it culturally and contextually relevant.

The major curative care challenge posed across the country is the loss of trust towards health-care providers (private sector due to commercial interests) and public sector due to overcrowding of health care with inadequate infrastructure due to low provisioning.

The government has slashed the limbs of the public health system by not strengthening secondary- and tertiary-level care in the public sector and instead favouring the growth of the private sector. Finally, the institutions of primary health care – the lifeline of India's public health system – were weakened by projecting them as curative care centres, for popularity and branding, without acknowledging their purpose in health programmes and their interconnections with grassroot-level institutions of health care.

*The views expressed are personal*

**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? (200 w/12.5m)

**UPSC Mains Practice Question** Critically analyse the shift in India's public health policy from strengthening public sector healthcare to prioritising publicly funded health insurance schemes like Ayushman Bharat. How has this shift impacted the accessibility and quality of healthcare for the vulnerable population? (250 w /15 m)

**Context :**

- The article critiques India's public health policies over the last decade, highlighting a shift from strengthening public sector healthcare to prioritising publicly funded health insurance schemes like Ayushman Bharat.
- This shift, favouring private healthcare providers, has weakened primary health institutions and failed to adequately address the healthcare needs of the vulnerable population.

**Public Health Needs and Policies**

- Public health needs are diverse and differ across social strata. Policies are formulated by the government based on available resources to address these needs.
- Health needs are either felt (experienced by the population) or projected (identified by experts).
- Recent public health policies in India, especially in the last decade, have been critiqued for failing to address these needs, particularly after the introduction of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

**Felt Needs in Public Health**

- **Diseases of Poverty:**
  - The poor and vulnerable face diseases like tuberculosis, malaria, and undernutrition.
  - Preventive measures for these diseases are essential but also challenging due to their impact on livelihoods.
- **Middle Class and Upper-Class Issues:**
  - Environmental concerns such as pollution (air, water), waste management, and lack of proper infrastructure.



- Rise in chronic illnesses, traffic accidents, and climate change further exacerbate the health needs of this group.

### ➤ **Curative Care:**

- Curative care remains the most controversial and critical aspect of public health policy.
- The poor rely on public sector institutions like primary health centres (PHCs) for affordable care.
- Secondary-level care has historically been neglected, and tertiary care is currently addressed by PMJAY.

### **Public Health Policies in the Last Decade**

- National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) (2005) and National Health Mission (NHM) (2013) were instrumental in reviving India's public healthcare system.
- These policies focused on strengthening primary health care, fostering trust in public sector health institutions, and improving infrastructure.
- However, the momentum was not sustained, and the government has since shifted focus to health insurance schemes like PMJAY under Ayushman Bharat, implemented from 2018.

### **Publicly Funded Health Insurance Schemes (PFHI)**

- The primary focus has shifted to PFHI schemes, such as PMJAY, which mainly benefit private health care providers.
- **Issues with PFHI:**
  - The scheme only covers hospitalisation expenses, not outpatient care, which is a deviation from global health insurance norms.
  - Outsourcing secondary and tertiary care to the private sector demonstrates the government's lack of intention to strengthen the public health infrastructure.
  - The majority of the population, not covered by government schemes, is left to rely on expensive, commercialised private healthcare.

### **Weakening of Public Sector Health Care**

- **Private Sector Dominance:**
  - Private hospitals have monopolised healthcare services, offering market-rate treatments under the guise of government schemes.
  - This practice has further weakened public sector healthcare, especially secondary- and tertiary-level services.
- **Transformation of Public Health Centers:**
  - In 2018, sub-centers, PHCs, and community health centres (CHCs) were transformed into Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs).
  - These HWCs are now portrayed as new institutions, despite similar facilities already existing, as per 2015 data.
  - The initiative to place community health officers with minimal training at these centres undermines their original purpose, reducing them to minimal curative care providers.

- Trust in public healthcare is deteriorating due to inadequate curative care and overstretched infrastructure.

### Challenges Facing the Public Health System

- The public health challenges in India are immense, with felt needs often going unaddressed.
- For the poor, basic primary- and secondary-level care is essential.
- Historically, institutions like PHCs provided these services and preventive measures, but their weakening has created a gap in healthcare delivery.
- **Loss of Trust:**
  - The private sector's commercial interests and the public sector's overcrowded facilities have led to a loss of trust in healthcare providers.
  - The failure to strengthen secondary and tertiary healthcare in the public sector has further exacerbated this issue.

### Conclusion

- Primary healthcare institutions, once the cornerstone of India's public health system, have been weakened by turning them into curative care centres without acknowledging their original purpose in preventive care.
- This has resulted in a major threat to the future of India's public health system, as the basic needs of the vulnerable population remain unaddressed.