

18 July, 2023

“The Path That Ends AIDS” Report

Context: Recently, UNAIDS made a significant announcement stating that despite the numerous challenges, there is a feasible path to end AIDS.

Report Findings:

AIDS Impact: In 2022, AIDS claimed a life every minute, with approximately 9.2 million people unable to access HIV treatment worldwide.

Treatment Status: Around 29.8 million people are receiving HIV treatment, and a target of 35 million people receiving treatment by 2025 seems achievable with sustained success.

Gender Disparities: Men living with HIV had lower treatment rates compared to women.

Children Affected: Despite a 64% reduction in AIDS-related deaths among children since 2010, around 84,000 children lost their lives to HIV in 2022.

Report Suggestions:

Stigma-Free Healthcare: Eliminating stigma in healthcare facilities and removing distrustful laws and practices are crucial.

Female-Friendly Prevention: Easier access to female-friendly biomedical prevention tools can reduce HIV risks in sexually active girls and women.

Funding and Prevention: Closing gaps in funding, particularly in prevention, can lead to further declines in HIV incidence.

About UNAIDS:

Joint Programme: UNAIDS leads global efforts to end AIDS by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, coordinating 11 United Nations system Cosponsors.

Mission: UNAIDS aims to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support.

Civil Society Representation: UNAIDS is a model for United Nations reform and has civil society represented on its governing body.

HIV and AIDS Overview:

What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) weakens the body's immune system, making it vulnerable to infections and diseases.

What is AIDS?

AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection when the immune system is severely damaged.

Treatment: There is no cure for HIV, but effective antiretroviral therapy (ART) helps reduce viral load and prevents AIDS progression.

Efforts in India: National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) leads HIV/AIDS control programs in India, aiming to end AIDS by 2030.

National AIDS Committee: Constituted in 1986 in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare after the first AIDS case was detected.

National AIDS Control Programme: Launched in 1992, NACO was formed to implement the program.

95-95-95 Strategy: Aims for 95% testing, treatment, and viral suppression rates by 2025, succeeding the earlier 90-90-90 Strategy.

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India-UAE Relations

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister of India undertook his fifth visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) within the past eight years.

Outcomes of the Visit:

MoUs Signed: Various MoUs signed for promoting use of local currencies (INR-AED) for cross-border transactions, interlinking payment and messaging systems, and establishing Indian Institute of Technology – Delhi in Abu Dhabi.

Energy Sector: Cooperation in Green Hydrogen, solar energy, and grid connectivity; increased investment in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve Programme.

Climate Change: Joint work on climate change issues during India's G20 and UAE's COP28 presidency; commitment to make COP28 a success.

Indian Diaspora: UAE's appreciation for the Indian diaspora's significant role in the country, reinforcing bilateral relations.

Bilateral Trade: Economic partnership stands at USD 85 billion, aiming to achieve USD 100 billion target before G20 meeting in Delhi.



Local Currencies for Cross-Border Transactions:

Pact: India and UAE signed an agreement to establish a framework for promoting rupee and UAE Dirham (AED) use in cross-border transactions.

Mechanism: Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS) to enable invoicing and payment in domestic currencies, developing an INR-AED foreign exchange market.

Significance: Facilitating investments, remittances, and reducing transaction costs and time for remittances from Indians in UAE.

Crude Oil Payments: India may use the mechanism for crude oil and other imports from UAE, currently made in US dollars.

Brief on India-UAE Bilateral Relations:

Diplomatic Relations: Established in 1972.

Shared Visions: India's Vision 2047 and UAE's Centennial Plan create commonalities in long-term vision, strengthening economic ties.

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA): Boosted bilateral trade, making UAE India's third-largest trading partner.

NRI Remittances: Large Indian community in UAE contributes over US\$17.06 billion in remittances annually.

Energy Security: UAE's reliability as an energy exporter complements India's industrial and manufacturing growth.

Technology Partnerships: Signed digital innovation, technology partnerships, and collaborations on space missions.

Strategic Convergences: Shared views on strategic issues like US dollar dominance, terrorism, and rules-based international order.

Minilateral Groupings: Formed India-Israel-US-UAE (I2U2) and India-UAE-France maritime trilateral.

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Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS)

Context: Recently, the government established a new panel to review all data from the National Statistical Office (NSO).

About SCoS:

Mandate Expansion: The Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) replaced by Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS) with a broader mandate to review all surveys under the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Chairman & Members:

Chairman: Pronab Sen, India's first chief statistician and former chairman of the National Statistical Commission (NSC), appointed as chair of SCoS.

Membership: SCoS comprises 10 official members and four non-official members, including eminent academics, with provision for up to 16 members as per MoSPI order.

Significance:

Addressing Critiques: Formation of SCoS holds significance amid critiques of India's statistical machinery by members of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.

Terms of Reference: SCoS tasked with reviewing all survey frameworks, methodology, and results, identifying data gaps for official statistics, and strategizing to fill those gaps.

Use of Administrative Statistics: Mandated to explore using administrative statistics to improve data outcomes.

Survey Results Approval: While the panel finalizes survey results, the NSC retains ultimate authority to approve publication.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI):

Creation: Formed as an independent ministry in 1999 through the merger of the Department of Statistics and Department of Programme Implementation.

Wings: Comprises Statistics Wing (National Statistical Office - NSO) and Programme Implementation Wing.

Statistics Wing: Includes Central Statistical Office (CSO), Computer center, and National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

Programme Implementation Wing: Divided into Twenty Point Programme, Infrastructure Monitoring, and Project Monitoring, and Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme.

National Statistical Commission: An autonomous body established by a government resolution, responsible for the development and approval of statistical methodologies and standards.

Indian Statistical Institute: An autonomous institute of national importance dedicated to research and teaching in statistics, declared so by an Act of Parliament.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Integrated Terminal Building



Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the new integrated terminal building at Veer Savarkar International Airport, Port Blair.

What is an Integrated Terminal Building?

An Integrated Terminal Building refers to a modern airport terminal that consolidates both domestic and international operations under one roof.

Boosting Connectivity: New terminal enhances Andaman and Nicobar Islands' connectivity, costing approximately 710 crore rupees.

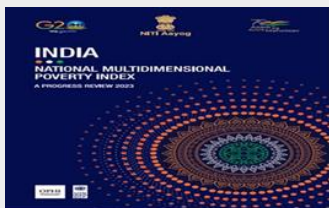
Unique Architecture: Terminal shaped like a shell, symbolizing the sea and islands, adding a distinct feature.

Sustainability Features: Incorporates sustainable elements like double insulated roofing, skylights, LED lighting, rainwater catchment, sewage treatment plant, and a 500 KW solar power plant.

Tourism Boost: Port Blair serves as a gateway to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, attracting tourists.

Employment Opportunities: New terminal generates local employment and contributes to the region's economic development.

Multidimensional Poverty Index



Recently, NITI Aayog released the Multidimensional Poverty Index, showing a decline from 24.85% to 14.96% in the country's poverty rate between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

What is Multidimensional Poverty Index?

The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a tool used to measure poverty in India beyond income-based indicators. It assesses multiple dimensions, such as health, education and standard of living, to provide a comprehensive understanding of poverty.

Decline in Poverty: According to the "National MPI, A Progress Review, 2023" by NITI Aayog, India has experienced a significant decline of 9.89 percentage points in multidimensional poverty. It decreased from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21.

Dimensions Considered: The index evaluates three fundamental dimensions: health, education and standard of living. It analyzes indicators like nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, access to electricity, sanitation and housing quality.

Regional Disparities: The MPI helps identify regional disparities in poverty, enabling targeted policy interventions to uplift the most vulnerable communities.

Bhoomi Samman Award



Today, President Droupadi Murmu presented the Bhoomi Samman Award 2023 to 68 District Collectors and nine State Secretaries for achieving 100% digitization of land records as part of the Union government's Digital India initiative.

What is Bhoomi Samman Award?

The Bhoomi Samman Award is a prestigious recognition presented by the Indian government to honor officials and individuals for their outstanding contributions towards achieving 100% digitization of land records.

Purpose:

Role in Governance:

Digitization of land records plays a crucial role in modernizing governance systems, reducing bureaucratic red tape and preventing fraudulent practices in land transactions.

Implications for Citizens:

The award recognizes efforts that directly benefit citizens by providing easy access to land-related information, reducing disputes and facilitating timely and accurate property documentation.

Government Initiative:

The Bhoomi Samman Award is an initiative of the Union government, which emphasizes the significance of digital technologies in various sectors, including land administration.

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Namada Craft



Recently, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, expressed his enthusiasm for the revival of Kashmir's centuries-old craft, known as 'Namda.'

What is Namda Craft?

Namda craft is a traditional form of handicraft originating from the Kashmir region in India. It involves the creation of felted woolen textiles, including rugs, carpets, blankets and decorative pieces, using a felting technique.

Technique: It involves felting of wool using heat, moisture and pressure to create textiles.

Products: Namda craft produces items like rugs, carpets, blankets, and decorative pieces.

Artistic Significance: Namda products are popular among locals and admired by art enthusiasts globally for their unique and exquisite artistry.

Economic Importance: Promoting Namda craft can provide economic opportunities for local artisans and uplift their livelihoods.

Gambusia fish



Recently, the Andhra Pradesh government released 10 million Gambusia fish to combat mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and dengue.

Biological Control: Gambusia fish, also known as mosquitofish, is used as a biological agent to control mosquito larvae due to its voracious appetite for them.

Malaria and Dengue: The initiative aims to combat mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and dengue in the state.

Breeding Capacity: A single female Gambusia can produce 900 to 1,200 offspring during its lifespan, leading to high breeding potential and adaptability in various environments.

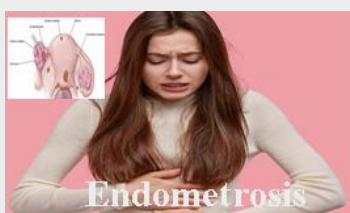
Invasive Species: Gambusia is listed as one of the 100 worst invasive alien species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Ecological Impact: Gambusia's introduction affected the ecosystem health of Nainital Lake in India, highlighting concerns about its impact on local biodiversity.

WHO Warning: The World Health Organization cautions against releasing exotic fish species like Gambusia into natural environments, as they may negatively affect local species and aquatic animals.

Concerns: The release of invasive alien Gambusia species raises concerns about potential harm to native freshwater species in Andhra Pradesh.

Endometriosis



Recently, endometriosis, a reproductive disease affecting 1 in 10 women worldwide, has gained attention.

What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a painful chronic disease where tissue resembling the uterine lining grows outside the uterus. It affects approximately 10% (190 million) of reproductive-age women globally.

Symptoms: Common symptoms include severe pelvic pain, painful menstruation, pain during urination, sexual intercourse and bowel movements, as well as fatigue and potential infertility.

Age Range: Endometriosis can begin at a person's first menstrual period and persist until menopause, leading to long-term health challenges.

Historical Discovery: Endometriosis was first characterized in 1860, but its first biomarkers were discovered 150 years later, indicating the complexity of its diagnosis.

Cause: The exact cause of endometriosis remains unknown. It affects women of various ethnic origins and social statuses worldwide.

Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary



Recently, a woman was tragically shot dead, and six others, including three forest guards, were injured in Assam's Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary.

Location: Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in the northeastern state of Assam, India.

Geographic Features: The sanctuary is located on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River and covers an area of approximately 44 square kilometers.

Avian Diversity: The sanctuary is particularly recognized for its significant bird population, with over 220 species of birds recorded, including several migratory species.

Mammals:

Bura Chapori is home to diverse mammalian species, including the Gangetic dolphin, water buffalo, capped langur, Bengal fox and various species of deer.

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	Wetland Ecosystem: The sanctuary encompasses wetlands, river channels, sandbars and grasslands, providing vital ecological support and resources for the wildlife. Conservation Efforts: Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary is protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and conservation initiatives are in place to preserve its natural heritage.
BIMSTEC	Recently, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar attended the Foreign Ministers' meeting of BIMSTEC in Bangkok, Thailand. Establishment: BIMSTEC was established in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Originally known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), it later became BIMSTEC with Myanmar joining in 1997 and Bhutan and Nepal joining in 2004. Focus Areas: Initially, BIMSTEC's cooperation focused on six sectors in 1997, including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries. Regional Cooperation: BIMSTEC aims to promote multi-sectoral technical and economic cooperation among its member countries in the Bay of Bengal region. India's Engagement: As a prominent member, India actively participates in BIMSTEC activities, aiming to strengthen regional ties and foster development in the region. 
Place in News Kerch Bridge	Recently, the Kerch Bridge, linking Russia to the occupied Crimean Peninsula, was attacked with two explosions. Geographical Location: The Kerch Bridge is located in the region of Kerch, connecting Russia to the Crimean Peninsula. It spans across the Kerch Strait, which separates the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Importance: It is a crucial infrastructure project designed to provide a direct road and rail link between mainland Russia and Crimea, enhancing connectivity and transportation. Length: The bridge spans approximately 19 kilometers (11.8 miles) across the Kerch Strait, making it one of the longest bridges in Europe. Opening Date: The bridge was officially opened for road traffic in May 2018, and the rail section was inaugurated in December 2019. Political Controversy: The construction and operation of the Kerch Bridge have been highly controversial due to the disputed status of Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014. Importance: It facilitates the supply of fuel, food, weapons and other products to Crimea, where the port of Sevastopol serves as the historic home base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. 

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