

Editorial of the Day – 24.03.2026

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1. The need to integrate nutrition in TB care (TH)

GS Paper II - Social Justice & Governance (Health)

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Sub-Topic- National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), Nikshay Poshan Yojana, and the role of Community-led Health Interventions.

1. Introduction

India continues to bear a high TB burden, recording over 25 lakh cases annually. While the medical infrastructure has improved, the journey to recovery is often hindered by deep-rooted social stigma and the physical toll of malnutrition. The current strategy marks a pivotal shift from a purely biomedical approach (focusing on drugs) to a community-centric model. This evolution recognizes that clinical success is inextricably linked to nutritional security and the psychological support provided by "TB Champions"—survivors who lead the charge in advocacy and care.

2. Lived Experiences and the Barrier of Stigma

The recovery process is as much an emotional struggle as it is a biological one—

Psychosocial Impact- Patients frequently endure isolation, loneliness, and active discrimination within their communities and families.

Vulnerable Demographics- Stigma disproportionately affects women, children, and the elderly, often leading to hidden cases or treatment non-compliance.

Social Exclusion- Discrimination remains a primary barrier, preventing individuals from accessing early diagnosis and community support systems.

3. Paradigm Shift- From Biomedical to Community Approach

The Indian TB response has undergone a fundamental transformation in its philosophy—

Historical Context- Earlier responses were strictly medical, focusing on clinical outcomes while ignoring the patient's socio-economic environment.

Inclusion of Lived Experiences- Moving beyond the "patient" label to acknowledge the individual's experience has improved treatment satisfaction and adherence.

The "TB Champion" Assumption- Initial skepticism that survivors would not re-engage with the system post-recovery has been disproved by the massive success of survivor-led advocacy.

4. The Strategic Role of "TB Champions"

TB Champions are survivors who leverage their personal journeys to transform care—

Survivor Advocates- They act as bridges between the formal healthcare system and the community, speaking a language of empathy that doctors often cannot.

Stigma Reduction- By speaking openly about their journey, they humanize the disease and encourage testing among the marginalized.

Peer Support- They provide motivation and behavioural coaching, ensuring that new patients do not lose hope during the long and often difficult drug regimens.

5. Programmatic Innovations (NTEP)

The National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) has introduced high-tech and patient-centric tools to improve outcomes-

AI-Enabled Screening- Utilizing Artificial Intelligence for rapid X-ray screening to detect TB in high-risk zones.

Improved Drug Regimens- Introduction of shorter, more effective drug combinations to reduce the pill burden on patients.

Nutrition Integration (Nikshay Poshan Yojana)- Financial support through Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) helps patients afford the high-protein diet necessary for recovery.

6. Community Networks and Future Sustainability

While community-led networks have gained momentum, their future depends on structural support-

Peer Counselling- These networks help reduce "self-stigma" (internalized shame) and provide a support system for mental well-being.

Sustainability Issues- A major hurdle is the financial sustainability of survivor-led networks, which often lack steady funding.

Socio-Economic Models- There is an urgent need for self-sustaining models that can integrate these networks into the permanent primary healthcare framework.

7. Conclusion

The fight against TB in India is transitioning into a "People's Movement." Medical treatment is the engine of recovery, but nutrition and community support are the fuel. By empowering TB Champions and ensuring nutritional security through programs like Nikshay Poshan Yojana, India can move closer to its elimination targets while restoring the dignity and well-being of millions of survivors.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-need-to-integrate-nutrition-in-tb-care/article70776979.ece>

Question

"The fight against Tuberculosis in India is transitioning from a 'clinical challenge' to a 'socio-economic movement.' Analyse the significance of integrating nutritional support and community-led advocacy in achieving the goals of the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

India reports over 25 lakh TB cases annually, bearing the highest global burden. While the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) has historically focused on a biomedical approach (diagnosis and drugs), the persistent challenges of stigma and malnutrition have necessitated a paradigm shift. The current strategy treats TB not just as a bacterial infection, but as a socio-economic condition requiring a holistic "people-powered" response.

2. Significance of Nutritional Integration

Tuberculosis and malnutrition exist in a vicious cycle—malnutrition weakens the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to TB, while TB leads to severe wasting and further nutritional depletion.

Immunity and Recovery- Proper nutrition is essential for the efficacy of anti-TB drugs. Without adequate protein and micro-nutrients, the body cannot repair tissue damage caused by the bacteria.

Nikshay Poshan Yojana- By providing financial support through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), the government recognizes that nutritional security reduces the risk of treatment default and mortality.

Economic Resilience- Nutritional support prevents the "catastrophic costs" associated with the disease, ensuring that the patient has the physical strength to eventually reintegrate into the workforce.

3. Role of Community-Led Advocacy- The "TB Champions"

The emergence of TB Champions (survivors who become advocates) has disproved the notion that TB is a "silent" disease of shame.



Stigma Reduction- Champions use their lived experiences to humanize the disease, encouraging early testing and reducing the social isolation of newly diagnosed patients.

Bridging the Systemic Gap- They act as empathetic intermediaries between the formal healthcare system and marginalized communities, ensuring that the "last mile" of care is reached.

Improving Adherence- Peer counselling by survivors significantly improves treatment compliance, which is critical in preventing the rise of Multi-Drug-Resistant TB (MDR-TB).

4. Critical Analysis of the "Socio-Economic Movement"

While the shift is promising, several challenges remain-

Digital and Financial Gaps- Issues with DBT payments and digital literacy among the most marginalized can hinder nutritional support.

Sustainability- Survivor-led networks often lack a self-sustaining financial model, relying heavily on intermittent grants.

Deep-Rooted Stigma- Despite advocacy, gender-based and caste-based discrimination in TB care persists in rural hinterlands.

5. Conclusion

To achieve the goal of a "TB-Mukt Bharat," India must ensure that the "clinical engine" of the NTEP is fuelled by nutritional security and steered by community leadership. Integrating science with social empathy ensures that patients do not just survive the infection, but recover their dignity and socio-economic standing. The transition to a "People's Movement" is the only path toward a sustainable victory over this ancient scourge.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-need-to-integrate-nutrition-in-tb-care/article70776979.ece>

2. UGC needs reform. But the new higher education bill is not the answer (IE)

GS Paper II - Governance & Social Justice

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Sub-Topic- Higher Education Regulatory Reforms, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and the VBSA Bill.

1. Introduction

In line with the reformatory spirit of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the proposed VBSA Bill seeks to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) with a new centralized umbrella body. While the intent is to move toward independent and transparent regulation, the bill is currently under intense scrutiny by a Parliamentary Standing Committee due to fears of over-centralization, the erosion of institutional autonomy, and the potential commercialization of higher learning.

2. Structural Issues in the UGC (The Legacy Challenges)

The move to replace the UGC stems from several long-standing institutional failures-

Bureaucratic Inefficiency- The UGC is often viewed as a monolith characterized by red tape and significant delays in approvals, which stifles timely decision-making.

Conflict of Interest- In its current form, the UGC manages funding, regulation, and accreditation. This overlap reduces transparency, as the "funder" and the "regulator" are the same entity.

Limited Capacity- Managing over 1,000 universities and 40,000+ colleges has proven difficult, with the commission lacking the specific domain expertise required for modern, diverse disciplines.

Weak Autonomy- Despite being a statutory body, the UGC has frequently been criticized for functioning as an extension of the government, limiting the academic independence of universities.



3. Reform Vision under NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 provided the blueprint that the VBSA Bill attempts to operationalize–

Separation of Functions– A move toward creating four independent verticals to handle regulation, funding, accreditation, and standard-setting to ensure internal checks and balances.

“Light but Tight” Regulation– The goal is to minimize day-to-day bureaucratic interference while maintaining strict, transparent norms for accountability.

Promotion of Autonomy– Granting institutions the freedom to innovate in curriculum design, research, and administration.

Ending ‘Inspection Raj’– Shifting from a system based on prior physical inspections to one based on self-disclosure and outcome-based evaluation.

4. Key Features of the VBSA Bill

The contemporary bill introduces several structural changes that differ from the legacy UGC model–

Umbrella Regulatory Structure– The VBSA acts as a supreme body supervising various councils, though critics argue these councils may lack individual functional autonomy.

Centralised Appointment Mechanism– The Union government retains significant power over the appointment and removal of VBSA members, leading to concerns about political influence.

Expanded Regulatory Powers– The VBSA possesses coercive authority, including the power to penalize institutions, derecognize degrees, and recommend the closure of non-compliant universities.

Delinking Funding from Regulation– In a major departure from the UGC, the VBSA will not handle grants. However, the bill currently lacks clarity on what the alternative funding mechanism will be.

5. Critical Analysis– Issues with the Proposed Bill

The bill has faced backlash on four primary fronts–

Centralisation of Power– Critics argue that despite the “multi-body” structure, effective control is concentrated in the Union government, contradicting the principle of decentralization.

Threat to Federalism– Education is on the Concurrent List. Since states manage over 80% of higher education institutions, their minimal representation in the VBSA structure is seen as a violation of cooperative federalism.

Erosion of Academic Autonomy– Increased regulatory intervention and the threat of penalties may stifle faculty recruitment, curriculum innovation, and institutional risk-taking.

Commercialisation Concerns– By delinking public funding from regulation and failing to emphasize state support, the bill may force institutions to adopt market-driven models, potentially making education unaffordable for the marginalized.

6. Federalism and Public Purpose

Cooperative Governance– For the VBSA to succeed, it must include consultative mechanisms with state governments to reflect regional diversity.

Social Justice– Publicly funded higher education is a primary vehicle for social mobility. Any shift toward commercial models’ risks excluding first-generation learners and undermining reservation policies.

Human Capital– Universities are not just “degree factories” but centres for skilled workforce development and innovation; their regulation must be balanced with their role in economic growth.

7. Way Forward

Reforming the regulatory landscape is necessary, but the VBSA must not be “old wine in a new bottle.” A balanced approach should–

1. Ensure independent and transparent appointments to the VBSA to guard against political interference.
2. Formalize State representation within the umbrella body to respect the constitutional spirit of the Concurrent List.
3. Provide a clear and robust public funding framework to prevent forced commercialization.



4. Uphold Academic Freedom as the core principle of any educational reform.

Source- <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/ugc-needs-reform-but-the-new-higher-education-bill-is-not-the-answer-10597334/>

Question

1. Introduction

The VBSA Bill 2026 marks a paradigm shift in India's higher education governance, operationalizing the "light but tight" regulatory vision of the NEP 2020. By replacing the nearly 70-year-old UGC, the Bill seeks to create a modern, vertically-aligned regulator. However, while it promises to end the "Inspection Raj," it simultaneously faces intense scrutiny for potentially concentrating power in the Union government at the expense of regional and academic independence.

2. The Case for a "Structural Reboot"

The Bill addresses several systemic flaws that had turned the UGC into a bureaucratic bottleneck-

Ending Overlapping Mandates- Unlike the UGC, which managed funding, regulation, and accreditation simultaneously, the VBSA proposes a separation of functions into independent verticals.

Outcome-Based Evaluation- It moves away from physical "inspections" toward transparent self-disclosure, aiming to reduce corruption and administrative delays.

Modernizing Capacity- The UGC was designed for an era with fewer than 100 universities; the VBSA is built to manage the complex needs of over 1,000 universities in a digital-first economy.

3. Critical Concerns- Centralization and Federalism

Despite its modern facade, the Bill has triggered a "federalism alarm"-

Erosion of State Role- Education is a Concurrent List subject. Since State-run institutions cater to over 80% of students, the lack of institutionalized State representation in the VBSA's decision-making bodies is seen as a blow to cooperative federalism.

Concentrated Appointment Powers- The Central government's control over the appointment and removal of VBSA members raises fears of a "loyalty-based" rather than "merit-based" regulatory environment.

Threat to Autonomy- The VBSA's power to penalize, derecognize, or close institutions acts as a "Sword of Damocles," potentially stifling academic dissent or innovative but unconventional curricula.

4. The Commercialization and Funding Gap

Delinking Funding- By removing the "Grants" function from the regulator without clarifying the alternative funding mechanism, the Bill risks leaving public universities in a financial vacuum.

Market Push- There is a legitimate concern that institutions will be forced to adopt market-driven models, which may prioritize "employability" over "equity," making higher education a luxury rather than a public right.

5. Conclusion

The VBSA Bill is a bold attempt to bring Indian higher education into the 21st century. However, a "Viksit Bharat" cannot be built on a centralized model alone. To succeed, the Bill must evolve from a "coercive regulator" into a "facilitative partner." This requires strengthening state participation, ensuring academic freedom, and guaranteeing that the transition from UGC does not lead to a "Commercialization Raj" that excludes the marginalized sections of society.

Source- <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/ugc-needs-reform-but-the-new-higher-education-bill-is-not-the-answer-10597334/>

3. Private Credit Markets and Emerging Financial Stability Concerns (BL)

General Studies Paper III- Economic development.

Topic- Indian Economy & Financial Markets.

Sub-Topic- Banking, NBFCs, and Shadow Banking

Introduction

Private credit has emerged as a rapidly growing segment of global finance, filling the gap left by traditional banks. However, its expansion—characterised by low transparency, high leverage, and regulatory arbitrage—raises concerns about whether the current boom may lead to systemic stress.

1. Nature of Private Credit Expansion

1. Growth driven by post-2008 banking regulations that constrained traditional lending.
2. Private credit funds lend directly to firms, often through non-bank financial intermediaries.
3. Increasing reliance on institutional investors (pension funds, insurers).

2. Structural Characteristics

Opacity and Limited Transparency

1. Deals are privately negotiated with limited public disclosure.

High Leverage

1. Multiple layers of borrowing and self-dealing within affiliated entities.

Regulatory Arbitrage

1. Activities shift to less-regulated jurisdictions (offshore centres).

3. Emerging Signs of Stress

Liquidity Risks

1. Illiquid assets funded by investors expecting stable returns.

Sectoral Vulnerabilities

1. Exposure to high-risk sectors like software, leveraged buyouts, and mid-sized firms.

Rising Defaults

1. Increasing loan restructuring and credit stress indicators.

4. Systemic Risk Concerns

Shadow Banking Risks

1. Similar to pre-2008 dynamics, with risks outside formal regulatory oversight.

Contagion Channels

1. Links with banks, insurers, and pension funds can transmit shocks.

Valuation Uncertainty

1. Lack of market pricing makes it difficult to assess true asset quality.

5. Limitations of Regulation

Fragmented Oversight

1. Private credit operates across jurisdictions with inconsistent regulation.

Delayed Risk Recognition

1. Losses may remain hidden due to opaque accounting practices.

Investor Exposure

1. Retail investors indirectly exposed via pension and insurance funds.

6. Way Forward

Enhanced Transparency

1. Mandate disclosures on loan structures, leverage, and risk exposure.

Stronger Regulation

1. Extend prudential norms to non-bank lenders and private funds.

Stress Testing

1. Regular assessment of systemic risks in shadow banking segments.

Investor Protection



1. Safeguard long-term savings through better risk assessment frameworks.

Conclusion

While private credit has improved access to finance, its opaque structure and rising leverage pose potential systemic risks. A balanced regulatory approach is essential to ensure financial stability without stifling innovation.

Source- <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/is-the-private-credit-boom-going-bust/article70776563.ece>

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. The rapid growth of private credit markets has introduced new risks to financial stability. Examine the structural vulnerabilities associated with private credit and suggest regulatory measures. (250 words)

Model Answer

Introduction

Private credit markets have expanded significantly as non-bank lenders fill gaps left by traditional banking. However, their opaque and leveraged nature raises concerns about financial stability.

Structural Vulnerabilities

1. Lack of Transparency

1. Limited disclosure makes risk assessment difficult.

2. High Leverage

1. Multiple layers of borrowing increase default risk.

3. Regulatory Gaps

1. Operates in less-regulated environments.

Measures

1. Strengthening Regulation

1. Extend oversight to private credit funds.

2. Enhancing Transparency

1. Mandatory disclosure norms.

3. Risk Monitoring

1. Conduct stress tests and monitor systemic exposure.

Conclusion

Private credit can support economic growth, but unchecked expansion may pose systemic risks. Effective regulation and transparency are essential to ensure stability.

Source- <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/is-the-private-credit-boom-going-bust/article70776563.ece>

4. Time Of Great Global Demographic U-Turn (HT)

General Studies Paper III- Economic development.

Topic- Human resources and social sector.

Sub-Topic- Population and associated issues

Introduction

The world is undergoing a major demographic transition, shifting from high fertility and mortality to ageing populations and declining birth rates. This "demographic U-turn" presents both opportunities and challenges, requiring countries to rethink population policies, labour markets, and social welfare systems.

1. Nature of the Demographic U-Turn

1. Earlier concerns focused on overpopulation and resource pressure.
2. Today, many countries face declining fertility rates and ageing populations.
3. The transition is uneven, with developing countries still experiencing population growth.

2. Historical Evolution of Population Policies

Malthusian Concerns

1. Early theories warned of population growth outpacing resources.

Population Control Measures

1. Countries adopted policies to reduce fertility rates, sometimes coercively.

Shift to Development Approach

1. Emphasis moved to education, healthcare, and women's empowerment as drivers of fertility decline.

3. Emerging Trends

Declining Fertility Rates

1. Many countries now have fertility rates below replacement level.

Ageing Populations

1. Increasing proportion of elderly population creates dependency challenges.

Regional Variations

1. Some regions, particularly in Africa and parts of Asia, still have high population growth.

4. Economic and Social Implications

Labour Market Impact

1. Shrinking workforce may reduce economic growth potential.

Rising Dependency Ratio

1. Higher burden on working population to support elderly citizens.

Fiscal Pressure

1. Increased demand for pensions, healthcare, and social security.

5. Policy Challenges

Balancing Growth and Sustainability

1. Need to manage both population decline and resource use.

Avoiding Coercive Measures

1. Past experiences highlight risks of forced population control policies.

Ensuring Gender Equity

1. Policies must respect women's rights and reproductive choices.

6. Way Forward

Human Capital Development

1. Invest in education, healthcare, and skills to maximise productivity.

Supportive Family Policies

1. Encourage balanced fertility through incentives and social support.

Active Ageing Strategies

1. Promote participation of elderly in economic and social activities.

Evidence-Based Policies

1. Design policies based on demographic realities and regional differences.

Conclusion

The global demographic shift requires a nuanced and balanced policy approach that recognises both the risks of population decline and the opportunities for human development. Sustainable solutions must prioritise rights-based, inclusive, and evidence-driven strategies.

Source-

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/time-of-great-global-demographic-uturn-101774281027865-amp.html>

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. The world is witnessing a demographic transition from population explosion to population decline. Discuss the implications of this shift and suggest policy measures to address emerging challenges. (250 words)

Model Answer

Introduction

The global demographic transition is characterised by declining fertility rates and ageing populations. This shift marks a move from concerns of overpopulation to challenges of population decline.

Implications

1. Labour Shortages

1. Declining workforce affects economic productivity.

2. Ageing Population

1. Increased dependency ratio and social security burden.

3. Economic Impact

1. Slower growth due to reduced labour supply.

Measures

1. Human Capital Development

1. Invest in education and skills.

2. Supportive Policies

1. Encourage balanced fertility rates.

3. Active Ageing

1. Promote elderly participation in workforce.

Conclusion

A balanced and rights-based approach is essential to manage demographic changes. Effective policies can turn demographic challenges into opportunities for sustainable development.

Source-

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/time-of-great-global-demographic-uturn-101774281027865-amp.html>