



Current Affairs of the Day

States told to adopt Delhi Police model

1. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has urged the State Governments to follow the crime analytics model of Delhi Police in preventing street crimes against women through crime mapping and identification of hotspots for reinforced action.
2. Communicating this to States, the Union Home Ministry said the Crime Mapping Analytics and Productive System and related tools were deployed on the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS).
3. In Tamil Nadu, which leads the nation in the concept of the all-woman police station, police were sensitised to the need for taking proactive measures to avert crime against women and children and also to prosecute offenders in such cases expeditiously.
4. Chennai Police have a woman officer in the rank of a Deputy Commissioner of Police to exclusively deal with crimes against women and children. An analysis of crimes against women by taking into account the nature of the offence, hotspots, age vulnerabilities, etc., was done to devise an effective strategy.

Indonesia volcano eruption

1. The eruption of Mount Semeru
2. The eruption of the biggest mountain on the island of Java caught locals by surprise



ART Bill plugs longstanding regulatory deficit. Ways must be found to make it more inclusive

The Lok Sabha passed the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill that sets standards and codes of conduct for fertility clinics and sperm banks in the country.



Increasing Demand for ART:

1. The piece of legislation caters to a longstanding need. In the past 20 years, the increase in the number of ART clinics in India has been amongst the highest in the world.
2. They cater to the burgeoning medical tourism industry and significantly, to a growing section of the country's population that is turning to ARTs such as gamete donation, intrauterine dissemination, in-vitro fertilisation and intracytoplasmic sperm injection to have children.
3. Because of declining fertility rates, a substantial section of Indians marrying later than the generation before them, and the increasing provenance of single parenthood, the use of such technologies is bound to grow.

Challenges in the ART sector:

1. At the same time, more than 80 per cent of clinics in the country offering ART facilities are reportedly unregistered. The ethical, as well as safety-related issues germane to this regulatory deficit, have been a part of the conversation for two decades.
2. The ICMR did lay down guidelines for ART clinics in 2005. But these protocols did not have any legislative backing.

Provisions of the bill:

1. If the ART Bill becomes a law, it would be incumbent on clinics to ensure that commissioning couples, women and gamete donors are tested according to the established protocols.
2. It also provides for a database of ART clinics in the country.



3. The Bill does tick several right boxes in stipulating that the clinics provide counselling about the chances of success, costs, side-effects and risks, including that of multiple pregnancies.
4. Importantly, it talks of informed consent of donors and legalises ART procedures for live-in couples and single women.
5. However, as several members pointed out in the debate in the Lok Sabha, the bill discriminates against LGBTQ and single male parents.
6. It goes against the spirit of the Supreme Court's landmark verdict in Navtej Johar v Union of India and assumes a formalistic position on the rights of same-sex couples to raise a family.

It seems that the heteronormative line of thinking of the Surrogacy Bill passed by the Lok Sabha in 2019 — the Rajya Sabha referred it to a select committee — has driven the ART Bill when it should have been the other way around given that the ART sector is more expansive than the surrogacy sector. The Upper House must take the conversation further and make sure that the law keeps up with the inclusive potential of reproductive technologies.

CABINET APPROVES THE ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY (REGULATION) BILL, 2020

Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years. India has one of the highest growths in the ART centers and the number of ART cycles performed every year.

Clinics in India offer nearly all the ART services—gamete donation, intrauterine insemination (IUI), IVF, ICSI, PGD and gestational surrogacy.

The last quarter of the 20th century has witnessed several major advances in reproductive medicine.

Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), including In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), has given hope to a multitude of persons suffering from infertility but also introduced a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues.

India has become one of the major centres of this global fertility industry, with reproductive medical tourism becoming a significant activity.

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Assisted Reproductive Technology- definition

- Assisted reproductive technology (ART): all treatments or procedures that involve the in vitro handling of both human oocytes and sperm or of embryos for the purpose of establishing a pregnancy. (Centre for Disease Control)
- These include:
 - In vitro fertilization (IVF)
 - Gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT)
 - Zygote intrafallopian transfer (ZIFT)
 - Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)
 - Surrogacy



Precious resource in peril

The two reports — ASER 2021 and NFHS-5 — capture the picture of real India, unlike the BSE index or the NIFTY index that capture the health of no more than 100 listed companies.

Two Reports, Key Conclusions

The two reports assess the impact of the pandemic. They cannot be brushed aside as the results of a one-off occurrence. The conclusions of the reports are depressing. Let me list the key findings:

ASER 2021 (Rural):

1. There is a clear shift in enrollment from private to government schools.
2. There is a steady increase in children taking 'tuition'.
3. Smartphone ownership has increased but children's access remains an issue.
4. There is a decrease in learning support at home as schools reopen.
5. There is a slight increase in learning materials available for children.

NFHS 2019-21:

1. The Total Fertility Rate has reached 2.0 (slightly below the replacement rate), but the population of the three states (also among the poorest) continues to grow at a higher rate.



2. Sex ratio among children born in the last five years has dropped inexplicably to 929 (females to males).
3. Sanitation, Clean Fuel and Health issues continue to be challenges to millions of families.
4. Mortality rates are falling, but are unacceptably high.
5. Stunting, Wasting and Anaemia are grave challenges to children.

Juxtapose the first set of conclusions on Education with the second set of conclusions on Health. It will be evident that the most precious resource of any country — children — is neglected in India, and there is scarcely any public discussion on the subject.

Key Findings:

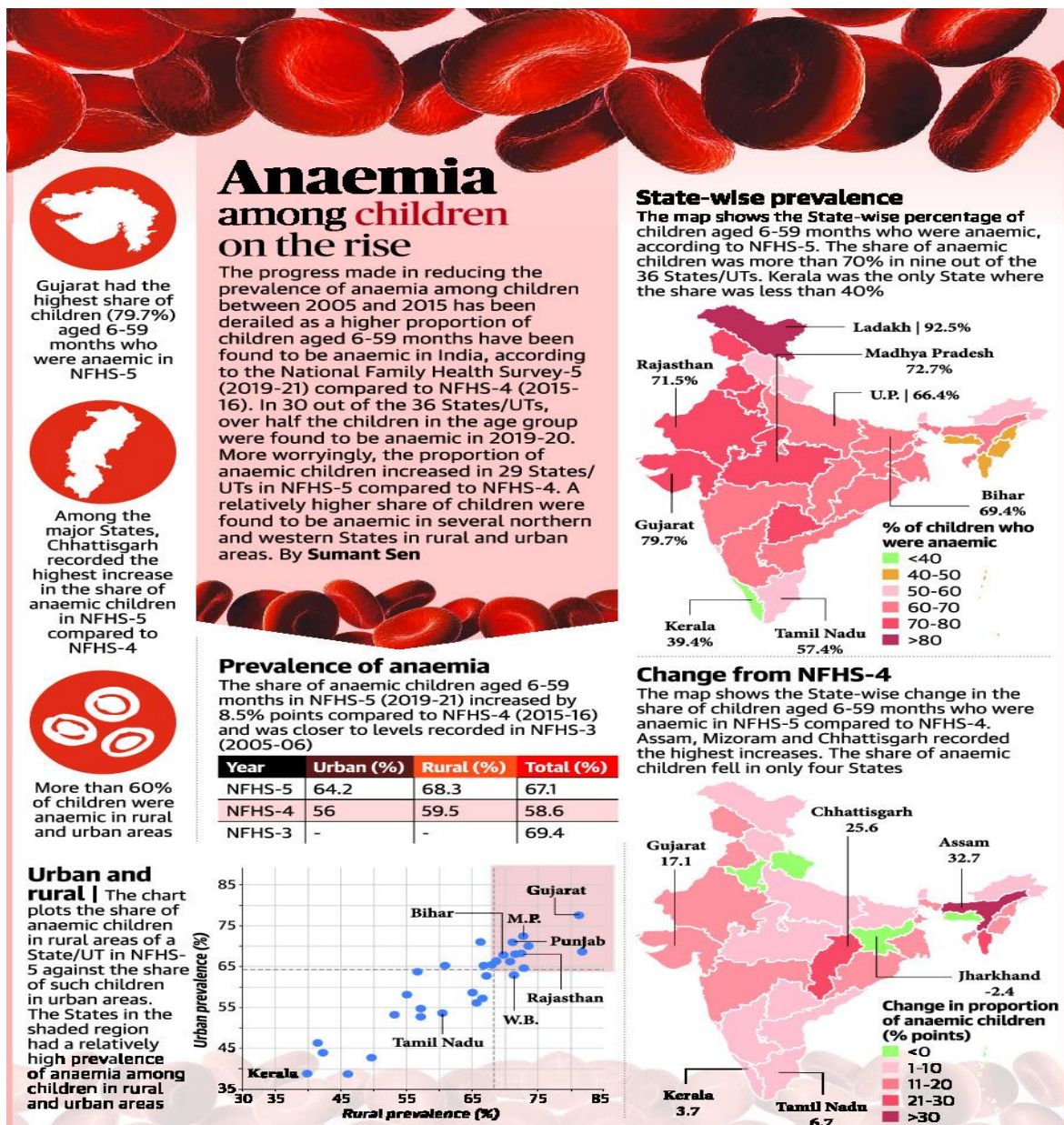
1. Couples have fewer children, but they are not giving birth to an approximately equal number of male and female children.
2. The three poorest states continue to be badly governed. They are adding to the population at a rate higher than the national average. That means more children are being added in poor states. Poverty alleviation measures seem to have failed in these states
3. Despite tall claims, India is not yet Open Defecation Free. The free-cylinder scheme (now called Ujjwala) is not the success that it is claimed to be.
4. While health infrastructure and health services have improved, maternal and child health are still neglected. We cannot accept a situation where many children are dying at birth (24.9 per thousand), during infancy (35.2) and within the first five years (41.9).
5. For the children who survive, nutrition is a big challenge. This is captured in the disconcertingly high percentage of stunting (35.5 per cent), wasting (19.3) and the nutritional deficiency (32.1).

Learning Loss:

1. The 'learning loss' in 2020-21 and 2021-22 has been colossal. Schools had been closed for 73 weeks against a global average of 35 weeks. Children have moved from private schools to government schools because of migration and financial distress.
2. The capacity of government schools to absorb the increased number of children is doubtful and many children were observed sitting in multi-grade classrooms.



- Only 39.8 per cent reported receiving learning material when schools had been shut. Foundational skills (reading and arithmetic) were woefully short of the level of the class.





MCQs

Q1. Consider the following statements

1. India is one of the leading countries in the fertility business
 2. Indian fertility clinics are well regulated
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

MAINS DAWP

Q1. *“As the world’s largest provider of early childhood services, anganwadis perform a crucial role in contributing to the life outcomes of children across India.”* Critically Discuss.