

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

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1 – Rare Diseases:

GS II

Health related issues

- **A Rare Disease: What Is It?**

- In general, rare diseases are those that affect a small percentage of the population and have different rates of occurrence depending on the country.
- Rare diseases are defined by the World Health Organisation as chronic, frequently crippling illnesses with an incidence of one or fewer cases per 1000 people.
- Different nations define rare diseases differently. For example, the US defines a condition as rare if it affects less than 200,000 individuals, but the European Union limits it to no more than 5 in 10,000 people.
- There isn't a set criteria for rare diseases in India yet, but according to the Organisation of Rare Diseases India (ORDI), an illness should be considered uncommon if it affects less than 1 in 5,000 persons.

- **Global Burden of Rare Diseases:**

- Around the world, uncommon diseases affect 300 million people.
- Approximately 3.5% to 5.9% of people suffer from rare diseases.
- Over 7000 rare diseases with a wide range of problems and symptoms make up 72% of hereditary diseases.
- Children are affected by 75% of uncommon disorders. In 70% of cases, uncommon disorders start in childhood.

- **Features and Consequences of Rare Diseases:**

- A wide range of illnesses and symptoms, differing not only between diseases but also between persons with the same condition, are prevalent in rare diseases.
- The chronic, degenerative, progressive, and frequently fatal nature of uncommon diseases has a substantial impact on the quality of life of their patients.
- Patients' and their families' anguish and suffering are made worse by the lack of effective treatments.

- **The difficulties faced by people with rare diseases:**

- delayed diagnosis as a result of inadequate scientific understanding and reliable data.
- disparities in care and treatment availability can result in financial and social costs.
- Common symptoms can conceal rare diseases that are underlying, resulting in an initial misdiagnosis.
- Patients with uncommon diseases typically need to wait five years for a diagnosis, according to EURORDIS.
- After seeking medical assistance, 70% of persons with uncommon disorders wait longer than a year to receive a definitive diagnosis.
- Diagnostic difficulties are exacerbated by doctors' ignorance of and inexperience with interpreting signs and symptoms of uncommon diseases.

- **What is the Indian Rare Disease Landscape?**

- **Effect:**

- India accounts for one-third of all uncommon disease instances worldwide, with over 450 different diseases diagnosed.
- Even with this high frequency, uncommon diseases are nevertheless mostly undiagnosed, poorly understood, and poorly treated in India.
- It is estimated that 8 to 10 crore Indians, mostly youngsters, suffer from uncommon ailments.

- **Obstacles in Policy and Practice:**

- A national policy for rare diseases was developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2017, but it was withdrawn in 2018 because of difficulties in putting it into practice.
- In 2021, the first National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD) was announced with revisions; however, issues still exist, such as the lack of a precise definition for rare diseases.

- **Funding and Availability of Treatment:**

- In India, fewer than half of the rare diseases that have been found can be treated, and only approximately 20 diseases have approved medicines.
- Only authorised Centres of Excellence (CoEs), which are few in number (12), dispersed unevenly, and frequently lacking in coordination, have access to approved treatments.
- The financial support provided by the NPRD recommendations is insufficient for the long-term care and treatment of chronic uncommon diseases and is limited to one patient per guideline.

- **Difficulties with Fund Utilisation:**

While still modest, budgetary allotments for uncommon diseases have increased, with Rs 93 crore set aside for 2023–2024.

- Inefficiencies in resource distribution are highlighted by confusion and differences in budget utilisation amongst CoEs.
- Unused money amount to a startling 51.3% of the total, even when patients require care immediately.
- While some CoEs have trouble using the monies that are allotted to them, others quickly run out of money, which results in unequal access to care.
- For example, Delhi used less than 20% of its cash, while Mumbai used all of its funds while treating just 20 of its 107 patients.
- When governmental assistance is insufficient, patients and their families are frequently left to shoulder the cost of their care.
- Patients and advocacy organisations demand that the federal and state governments provide consistent funding to help the treatment of rare diseases.
- For patients, particularly those who have used up their allocated finances and are finding it difficult to continue their treatment, sustainable funding is essential.

Source → The Hindu

2 - Rajya Sabha Elections:



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Election related issues

- **How are elections for the Rajya Sabha held?**
- In accordance with Article 80 of the Constitution, the elected members of each State's Legislative Assembly serve as the indirect electors for each State's Rajya Sabha Members.
- The Rajya Sabha polls will only be necessary if there are more candidates than there are seats available.
- Prior to 1998, the results of the Rajya Sabha elections were typically certain. This was because the parties controlling the state assembly frequently had their nominees win with little opposition.
- Nevertheless, cross-voting occurred during the Maharashtra Rajya Sabha elections in June 1998, which led to the defeat of a Congress party candidate.
- **Representation of the People Act of 1951:**
- The Representation of the People Act, 1951 was amended in 2003 to prevent MLAs from engaging in this kind of cross-voting.
- The Act's Section 59 was modified to stipulate that open ballot voting will be used for Rajya Sabha elections.
- Political party MLAs are expected to present their ballots to the party's designated representative.

- Voting shall be void if the ballot paper is not shown to the authorised agent or to any other person.
- It is forbidden for independent MLAs to display their ballots to third parties.
- **The Rajya Sabha election process:**
 - Seat Distribution: There are 250 members in the Rajya Sabha, who are elected from states and union territories such as Delhi and Puducherry.
 - Twelve of the candidates are directly nominated by the President and are from the social service, science, literature, and the arts.
 - States receive seats in the Rajya Sabha according to their populations. For instance, Goa has one Rajya Sabha seat although Uttar Pradesh has a quota of thirty-one.
 - Single Transferable Vote (STV) indirect election system: The state legislative assembly members elect Rajya Sabha members using an indirect election system that uses proportional representation.
 - The population of each MLA's individual constituency determines their voting power under this arrangement.
 - Quotas: In order to be elected, a candidate must to meet predetermined thresholds of votes. By dividing the total number of valid votes by the total number of seats available plus one, the quota is calculated.
 - Since each MLA has a vote worth 100, the initial quota in states with multiple seats is determined by multiplying the total number of MLAs by 100.
 - Preferences and Surplus: MLAs rank their preferences against each candidate as they fill out the ballot paper with the names of candidates from different parties. A 1 represents the top preference (the first preferential vote), a 2 the next, and so on.
 - A candidate is declared elected if they collect enough first-choice votes to reach or surpass the quota.
 - Should a victorious candidate possess extra votes, those ballots are routed to their second preference (designated as option 2). In the event that more than one applicant has a surplus, the largest surplus is sent first.
 - Elimination of Lesser Votes: In order to avoid wasting votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their unexhausted ballot papers are redistributed among the remaining candidates if the necessary number of candidates are not elected following surplus transfers.
 - A ballot paper that has no more choices listed for running candidates is referred to as a "exhausted paper".
 - Till enough candidates meet the quota to occupy every seat that becomes available, this process of transferring excess votes and eliminating candidates doesn't stop.

Source → The Hindu

3 - The Cooperative Sector in India:

GS III

Infrastructure related issues

- The World's Largest Grain Storage Plan pilot project was recently launched in 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) spread across 11 states by the Prime Minister of India.
- It represents a noteworthy advancement for the cooperative industry.
- **What Benefits Does the Grain Storage Plan Offer?**
 - About: With an investment of ₹1.25 lakh crore, the Grain Storage Plan seeks to construct 700 lakh tonnes of storage capacity over the following five years.
 - This entails combining numerous current Government of India policies to create agricultural infrastructure at the PACS level, such as decentralised godowns, custom hiring centres, processing units, Fair Price Shops, etc.
 - Anticipated Results: Providing bridging financing for the subsequent crop cycle, allowing farmers to store their produce at PACS godowns, or allowing them to sell at MSP to prevent distress sales.
 - Increasing grain storage lowers post-harvest losses, boosting farmer incomes and guaranteeing local food security, all of which benefit consumers.
- **What is the Indian cooperative sector's current state?**
 - About: Cooperatives are people-centered businesses that are owned, managed, and operated by its members to achieve their shared goals and needs in the areas of social, cultural, and economic development.
 - India boasts one of the biggest cooperative networks globally, comprising more than 800,000 cooperatives across many industries such as agriculture, credit, dairy, housing, and fisheries.
 - India's Cooperative Sector Evolution:
 - First Five-Year Plan (1951–1956): Emphasised cooperative development as a means of all-encompassing community development.
 - Establishment and operation of multi-state cooperatives are governed by the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act of 2002.
 - The freedom to establish cooperative societies was established as a fundamental right by the 97th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2011 (Article 19).
 - established Article 43-B, the new Directive Principle of State Policy on Cooperative Societies.
 - included "The Co-operative Societies" as a new Part IX-B (Articles 243-ZH to 243-ZT) into the Constitution.

- delegates power to state legislatures for other cooperative societies and gives Parliament the ability to pass legislation governing multi-state cooperative societies (MSCS).
- The Ministry of Agriculture was in charge of cooperative affairs until the Union Ministry of Cooperation was established in 2021.
- The Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Act of 2022 seeks to improve multi-state cooperative societies' regulatory framework.
- presents the Co-operative Election Authority, which will regulate board elections in cooperative societies with many states.
- mandates that multi-state cooperative societies get approval from the government before redeeming their shares.
- argues that in order to revitalise failing cooperative societies, a Co-operative Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Development Fund should be established and sponsored by successful multi-state cooperative societies.
- allows state cooperative societies to combine with already-existing multi-state cooperative societies, with state laws controlling the merger.

• **Instances of Indian cooperatives include:**

- The base of the short-term cooperative lending structure are Primary Agricultural lending Societies.
- It acts as the last line of communication between the higher financing organizations—the RBI/NABARD and the Scheduled Commercial Banks—and the final borrowers, or farmers.
- Anand Milk Union Limited, or AMUL, is a federation of millions of milk producers in Gujarat. It is a major dairy company and a leader in India's White Revolution. India became the largest milk producer in the world as a result of its success.
- Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative, or IFFCO, is one of the biggest fertiliser cooperatives globally and is vital to the supply of high-quality fertilisers and agricultural inputs to farmers throughout India.
- A well-known network of farm food retailers that guarantees farmers receive fair profits is HOPCOMS (Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society).
- Lijjat Papad, also known as Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad, is a motivational women's cooperative that empowers women by producing papad, an Indian lentil cracker.
- In the Bengal Secretariat Cooperative Society v. Aloke Kumar decision, the Supreme Court suggested giving the State Legislatures the authority to enact relevant laws for state cooperative societies and the Parliament the authority to do so for multi-state cooperative societies.

• **What Are the Main Obstacles That India's Cooperatives Face?**

• **Issues with Management and Governance:**

- **Limited Professionalism:** The absence of professional management structures in many cooperatives causes ineffective decision-making and operations.

- **Political Interference:** Political meddling in cooperative operations erodes their independence and affects their capacity to successfully represent the interests of their members.
- **Resource and Capital Restraints:**
 - **Inadequate Funding:** It might be difficult for cooperatives to obtain enough money for modernization, growth, and the creation of new projects.
 - **Limited Infrastructure:** Small cooperatives' ability to grow and compete is hampered by a lack of suitable processing facilities, storage facilities, and market connections, especially in rural areas.
- **Cultural and Social Aspects:**
 - **Low Awareness and Participation:** Potential members' lack of knowledge about the cooperative model and its advantages restricts their ability to participate.
 - **Social Inequalities:** Caste-based and social inequalities can occasionally act as obstacles to fair representation and participation in cooperatives.
- **What Actions Can Be Taken to Strengthen India's Cooperative Sector?**
 - **Infrastructure Development:** To fortify value chains and improve market access for cooperative products, more money must be allocated to the construction of infrastructure, such as processing plants, warehouses, and cold storage facilities.
 - **In order to increase the effectiveness of cooperative operations and management, it is also necessary to encourage the adoption of technology and digitalization.**
 - **Cooperatives as Innovation Hubs:** Changing the idea that cooperatives are just traditional and rural organisations to centres of innovation and experimentation.
 - **It's also important to emphasise cooperatives that use innovative farming methods and prioritise renewable energy.**
 - **The term "Influencers" refers to the young, tech-savvy cooperative members who are identified and developed to become thought leaders and advocates who use social media and other online platforms to transform the perception of cooperatives.**
 - **Cooperative Acceleration Zones:** Designating particular regions as zones for cooperative experimenting with innovative business models, with temporary regulatory relaxations and incentives offered to promote diverse and cooperative testing.
 - **Cooperative-led tourist Initiatives:** Creating community-based and cooperatively run ecotourism and tourist programmes in rural regions that let visitors experience the customs, culture, and way of life of the locals.
 - **empowering regional groups to oversee tourism operations cooperatively in order to create revenue, protect the environment, and advance sustainable development.**

Source → The Hindu

4 - Relations between India and Sri Lanka:

GS II

International Relations

- The Indian government is providing grant assistance for the project in the amount of USD 11 million.
- India has taken the role of Sri Lanka's Cabinet in approving the Sinsoar-Etechwin Joint Venture in China, a Chinese project, to carry out renewable energy projects in these three islands.
- **What is the Sri Lankan Hybrid Renewable Energy System Project?**
- It entails building hybrid renewable energy systems that combine battery power, standby diesel power systems, wind, solar, and other energy sources.
- This programme is a component of India's larger effort to assist Sri Lankan energy projects, especially those in the country's north and east.
- Other renewable energy projects in various locations of Sri Lanka are also being undertaken by the National Thermal Power Corporation and the Adani Group.
- The project intends to meet the three islands' residents' energy needs. It has 1,700 kW of solar power, 2,400 kWh of battery power, 2,500 kW of standby diesel power system, and 530 kW of wind power.
- **Geopolitical Background:**
- The project is a reflection of geopolitical dynamics, with India responding to worries over a Chinese-backed project in the region by offering grant support (instead of China's loan-based initiative).
- This is indicative of a larger struggle for dominance in the Indian Ocean region between China and India.
- In addition to meeting energy requirements, the project has geopolitical ramifications that highlight the strategic significance of the region's energy infrastructure.
- **What is the state of relations between Sri Lanka and India?**
- **Historical Connections:**
- Trade, religion, and cultural relations between India and Sri Lanka date back thousands of years.
- The two nations have close cultural ties, with many Sri Lankans deriving their ancestry from India. India is the birthplace of Buddhism, which is a significant religion in Sri Lanka.

- **Indian Financial Assistance:**

- During an extraordinary economic crisis, India gave Sri Lanka help worth about USD 4 billion, which was essential to the country's survival.
- A severe shortage of foreign exchange reserves caused Sri Lanka to experience the biggest financial crisis since gaining independence from Britain in 1948, which occurred in 2022.

- **Function in Debt Reorganisation:**

- India has assisted Sri Lanka in restructuring its debt by working with creditors and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- India was the first nation to provide its letter of support for Sri Lanka's debt restructuring and financing.
- A shared vision, agreed upon by the two nations, places a strong emphasis on holistic connectivity, encompassing port connection, logistics, People to People connectivity, renewable energy cooperation, and grid connectivity for power trading.

- **Consent for a Petroleum Pipeline with Multiple Projects:**

- The establishment of a multiproduct petroleum pipeline from southern India to Sri Lanka has been agreed upon by both countries.
- The goal of this pipeline is to give Sri Lanka access to a reasonably priced and dependable supply of energy resources. The importance of energy for advancement and economic growth is what is motivating efforts to build the petroleum pipeline.

- **Acceptance of India's UPI in Sri Lanka:**

- With Sri Lanka's adoption of India's UPI technology, the two nations' fintech connectivity has improved significantly.
- The economy of Sri Lanka is also benefited by the rupee's use in trade settlement. These are practical measures to support the growth and recovery of Sri Lanka's economy.

- **Financial Links:**

- After the US and UK, India is Sri Lanka's third-biggest export market. The advantages of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement are seen in more than 60% of Sri Lanka's exports. Another significant investor in Sri Lanka is India.
- From 2005 to 2019, India's foreign direct investment (FDI) totaled over USD 1.7 billion.
- Joint military and naval exercises (Mitra Shakti and SLINEX) are conducted by India and Sri Lanka.

- Sri Lanka also participates in organisations led by India, such as SAARC and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).
- With over 100,000 visitors in 2022, India ranked as Sri Lanka's main tourism supplier.

• **What Importance Do Relations Between India and Sri Lanka Have?**

- India's development is closely connected to that of its neighbours, and Sri Lanka wants to further its own development by joining the Southern economy in South Asia.
- Positioned across the Palk Strait and close to India's southern coast, Sri Lanka is an important part of the interaction between the two countries.
- Due to Sri Lanka's strategic location at the intersection of crucial shipping lanes, India has critical control over the Indian Ocean, which is a vital waterway for both trade and military operations.
- Improving digital payment networks between the two countries will facilitate business transactions and encourage economic cooperation between Sri Lanka and India.
- This development would facilitate trade while also enhancing connection for traveller interactions between the two countries.

• **What Problems Exist in the Relations Between Sri Lanka and India?**

• **Fisheries Conflict:**

- The right to fish in the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar is one of the long-standing disputes between India and Sri Lanka. Authorities in Sri Lanka have frequently detained Indian fishermen on suspicion of breaching the maritime boundary and fishing illegally in Sri Lankan waters.
- Tensions have resulted from this, as have sporadic confrontations involving fisherman from both nations.

• **Conflict on Katchatheevu Island:**

- The ownership and usage rights of the uninhabited island of Katchatheevu, which is situated in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka, are at the centre of the Katchatheevu dispute.
- Katchatheevu's ownership was changed in 1974 when the prime ministers of Sri Lanka and India came to an agreement that acknowledged the island as part of Sri Lanka.
- Nonetheless, the pact allows Indian pilgrims to visit a Catholic shrine there, as well as for fishermen to carry on fishing in the nearby waters and dry their nets on the island.
- Even though fishermen from both nations have previously used the waters, a 1976 supplemental agreement established exclusive economic zones and maritime borders, restricting fishing without express authorization.

- **Security at the Border and Smuggling:**

- The impermeable sea border that separates India and Sri Lanka has raised issues with border security and the smuggling of products, including illegal immigrants and drugs.

- **Tamil Ethnic Problem:**

- In India-Sri Lanka ties, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka—which primarily affects the Tamil minority—has been a touchy subject. India has always cared for the rights and well-being of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka.

- **The Influence of China:**

- China's growing geopolitical and economic sway over Sri Lanka, particularly its investments in infrastructure projects and the expansion of the Hambantota Port, has alarmed India. There have been moments when this has been perceived as a threat to India's regional interests. In Sri Lanka, a few Chinese projects include:
- Sri Lanka and the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of China came to a deal in 2023 to pay off roughly USD 4.2 billion of Sri Lanka's outstanding debt.
- Under the direction of China Merchants Port Holdings, China has invested in the South Asia Commercial and Logistics Hub (SACL) in Colombo Port.
- The Faxian Charity Project provides food handouts and assistance to underprivileged people in Sri Lanka.

- **The Way Ahead:**

- Make certain that the project moves smoothly from the planning stage to the implementation stage. Monitoring and assessment should be done on a regular basis to keep tabs on developments, spot problems, and make required corrections.
- Engage the community in the development and execution of the project. To guarantee community support and buy-in, this could involve awareness campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and discussions.
- Make environmental sustainability a top priority by carrying out in-depth environmental impact assessments and implementing policies to reduce any adverse effects on regional ecosystems and biodiversity.

Source → The Hindu