



# Daily Current Affairs



## To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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## 1 India's updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

**Context:** India's updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for 2024-2030 was launched at COP 16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to advance biodiversity conservation efforts in line with global biodiversity targets. Here are the key points:



### Major Highlights of NBSAP:

- Alignment with Global Frameworks:** India's NBSAP is designed to meet the objectives of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), setting forth 23 National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs) aimed at reducing threats to biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and strengthening conservation tools.
- Focus on Ecosystem Resilience:** Each target links to strategies for ecosystem resilience, species recovery, and sustainable management practices.
- Centralized Implementation:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is the central agency responsible for overseeing the action plan's execution across India.

### Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):

- Objectives:** Established under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1993, the CBD focuses on conserving biological diversity, ensuring sustainable use, and promoting equitable sharing of biodiversity benefits.

### The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):

- Overview:** Adopted during COP15 in 2022, it is often referred to as the "Paris Agreement for Nature."
- Goals and Targets:** The GBF includes four global goals and 23 targets to be met by 2030, such as reducing invasive species by half, curbing harmful subsidies, and establishing a \$500 billion annual reduction in harmful incentives.
- 30X30 Target:** Aiming to protect 30% of land and marine areas by 2030, the framework promotes the restoration of degraded ecosystems and strives to minimize the destruction of biodiversity-rich areas.

### Major Outcomes of COP 16:

- Cali Fund:** A new global mechanism designed to equitably distribute the benefits derived from digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources. This voluntary fund encourages firms to contribute 1% of profits or 0.1% of revenue.
- Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC):** A program to strengthen IPLCs' role in biodiversity conservation through meaningful participation and contribution.
- Synthetic Biology:** An expert group will assess synthetic biology's potential benefits and evaluate the impact of new technologies.
- Invasive Alien Species:** Guidelines were proposed for controlling invasive species, with recommendations covering e-commerce and analysis methodologies.
- Biodiversity and Health:** A Global Action Plan promoting a "One Health" approach to curb zoonotic and non-communicable diseases.
- Risk Assessment on Biosafety:** New voluntary guidelines were issued for assessing risks of living modified organisms (LMOs) with gene drives, allowing countries to adapt these to their ecological contexts.

## 2 Women's Labour Force Participation in India

**Context:** India faces significant challenges in female labour force participation, a concern recently highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its report on the impact of care responsibilities. This situation primarily results from gendered caregiving roles, which burden women disproportionately, restricting their access to the workforce.



### Key Statistics on Women's Labour Force Participation in India

- High Percentage Outside the Workforce:** Over 53% of Indian women are not part of the labour force, mainly due to unpaid caregiving duties. In contrast, only 1.1% of men are outside the workforce for similar reasons.
- Unpaid Household Work:** The 2023-24 Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) shows that 36.7% of women engage in unpaid household duties, a significantly higher share than men.
- Time Spent on Domestic Work:** According to the 2019 Time Use Survey, 81% of females aged 6 and above spend over five hours daily on unpaid domestic activities.
- Caregiving Time Disparities:** Data indicates that 26.2% of females aged six and older dedicate more than two hours per day to caregiving tasks, in contrast to 12.4% of males.

### Global Perspectives:

- Globally, caregiving responsibilities prevent millions of women from joining the workforce. In 2023, of the 748 million people worldwide not in the labour force due to caregiving, 708 million were women. Regions such as Northern Africa, the Arab states, and Asia-Pacific report particularly high rates of women limited by caregiving roles.

In contrast, countries with high female workforce participation, like Belarus, Bulgaria, and Sweden, achieve lower rates of women outside the workforce (under 10%) by investing heavily in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), dedicating around 1% of their GDP to these programs.

### Key Barriers to Workforce Inclusion:

- Educational and Employment Barriers:** Low education levels and limited job opportunities restrict women's workforce participation.
- Inadequate Infrastructure:** Insufficient care facilities make it difficult for women to balance work with caregiving.
- Cultural Norms:** Societal expectations of women's caregiving roles further hinder their labour market access, especially in rural areas.

### Way Forward:

To increase female workforce participation, India must:

- Invest in the Care Economy:** Significant investments in ECCE could relieve some of the caregiving burdens on women.
- Promote Gender Equality:** Such investments can foster greater gender parity, unlocking the economic potential of women by enabling them to participate more fully in the workforce.

Strengthening India's care infrastructure and addressing cultural expectations will be crucial to reducing the gender disparity in labour force participation and enhancing economic growth.

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### 3 The paradox of stagnant rural wages

**Context:** India's economic growth has been impressive in recent years, with an average GDP increase of 7.8% over the past three fiscal years. However, rural wage growth has remained stagnant, particularly in real terms, revealing a paradox between the nation's macroeconomic achievements and the limited financial gains experienced by rural workers.



#### Overview: Rural Wages vs. Economic Growth

- **Economic Growth:** Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, India's GDP grew by an average of 4.6%, with an accelerated growth of 7.8% over the last three years. The agricultural sector also performed relatively well, with growth rates of 4.2% and 3.6% for the same periods.
- **Wage Growth Data:** Rural wages rose by 5.2% annually in nominal terms from 2019 to 2024, but after accounting for inflation, the real wage growth was actually -0.4%. This highlights a disconnect between macroeconomic growth and improvements in real income for rural workers.

#### Factors Contributing to Stagnant Rural Wages

##### 1. Increasing Female Labour Force Participation (LFPR):

- The female LFPR has risen from 24.5% in 2018-19 to 41.7% in 2023-24, with rural female LFPR reaching 47.6%.
- Initiatives such as Ujjwala, Har Ghar Jal, and Swachh Bharat have freed up time for women, allowing them to enter the workforce. This influx has expanded the rural labour pool, creating a supply-demand imbalance that exerts downward pressure on wages.

##### 2. Shift in Labour Demand:

- Although more women are joining the labour force, many find employment in agriculture, which offers lower wages than industrial jobs.
- Economic growth has focused on capital-intensive sectors that rely less on labour, thus limiting wage growth opportunities in rural areas. As more workers join agriculture—a sector with already low productivity per worker—wages remain suppressed due to an oversupply of labour.

#### Steps Taken to Address Low Rural Wages:

##### 1. Income Transfer Schemes:

- **State Initiatives:** States have launched income support schemes that target women, with an estimated budget allocation of Rs 2 lakh crore annually. For instance, Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin Yojana offers direct financial aid to women, helping to cushion low wages.
- **Central Government Schemes:** The Centre's PM-KISAN scheme provides Rs 6,000 annually to farmer households, while PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) distributes free grain to low-income families, providing a crucial buffer against low rural income levels.

**Conclusion:** Despite the government's efforts through income support programs, real rural wage growth remains sluggish. For inclusive economic prosperity, addressing the structural causes of low rural wages is essential. Policies should aim to shift rural labour towards higher-paying sectors and balance the labour supply to alleviate the downward wage pressures seen in the agricultural sector.

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## 4 India has brought back 1 lakh kg of gold from UK

**Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently repatriated around 130 metric tonnes of gold from the Bank of England, marking a notable shift in its reserve management strategy. This decision reflects India's commitment to bolstering its economy, reducing dependence on foreign reserves, and aligning with global trends in gold acquisition.



### Rise in the RBI's Domestic Gold Holdings:

- As of September 2024, the RBI's domestic gold holdings have surged to 510.46 metric tonnes, up from 295.82 metric tonnes in March 2022.
- Gold held abroad with the Bank of England has decreased from 453.52 metric tonnes in March 2022 to 324 metric tonnes.
- The share of gold in India's foreign exchange reserves has also increased, with the value proportion rising from 8.15% in March 2024 to 9.32% in September 2024.

### Gold Reserves at the Bank of England:

The Bank of England, housing one of the world's largest gold vaults, secures reserves for numerous central banks globally. Storing part of India's gold in London provides the RBI with quick access to the London bullion market, enhancing liquidity in times of need. Notably, in 1991, India deposited 47 tonnes of gold in London to address a balance of payments crisis, marking a contrasting period when gold was seen as a last resort for an economically stressed India.

### Factors Behind the RBI's Gold Repatriation Strategy

#### 1. Global Trend of Central Banks Increasing Gold Reserves:

- Since the U.S. imposed sanctions on Russia in 2022, there has been a trend of "de-dollarisation" as central banks seek to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar by accumulating gold.
- India has emerged as one of the largest gold buyers in the G20, surpassing both Russia and China.

#### 2. Cost and Strategic Benefits:

- Storing gold domestically reduces expenses associated with international storage fees.
- Increasing domestic reserves signifies India's economic strength, contrasting with the 1991 scenario when pledging gold represented economic vulnerability.

3. **Enhanced Domestic Storage Capacity:** The RBI's repatriation of gold signals India's improved storage capacity, allowing a more strategic and secure reserve management approach.

4. **Economic Diversification and Inflation Hedge:** Gold offers stability amidst currency fluctuations, economic uncertainty, and inflation, balancing India's reserves portfolio and providing resilience against economic shocks.

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### Significance of Increasing Gold Reserves:

- **Sign of Economic Strength:** Repatriating gold symbolizes a transformation from a vulnerable economy in 1991 to a stable, self-reliant one today.
- **Strategic Value:** Storing gold in India allows the RBI to manage this national asset directly, providing more control over the country's reserves.
- **Enhanced Financial Security:** A diversified reserve portfolio with higher gold holdings offers a hedge against inflation, protecting the Indian economy from currency devaluation and inflationary pressures.

### Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Overview:

- **Establishment:** Formed on April 1, 1935, under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- **Location:** Initially in Kolkata, moved permanently to Mumbai in 1937.
- **Ownership:** Originally privately owned; nationalized in 1949, now fully owned by the Government of India.

### Preamble:

- RBI's primary role is to ensure monetary stability, manage currency and credit systems, and maintain a modern monetary policy for price stability and growth.

### Central Board:

- **Governance:** Directed by a central board appointed by the Government of India, with a tenure of four years.
  - **Composition:**
    - *Official Directors:* Governor and up to four Deputy Governors.
    - *Non-Official Directors:* Ten experts from various fields, two government officials, and one director from each of the four local boards.

### Main Functions:

1. **Monetary Authority:**
2. **Financial System Regulator & Supervisor:**
3. **Foreign Exchange Manager:**
4. **Currency Issuer:**
5. **Developmental Role:**
6. **Payment and Settlement Systems Regulator:**

**Related Roles:** Acts as **Banker to the Government** and **Banker to Banks**.

**Offices:** Operates in 33 locations across India.

**Conclusion:** The RBI's move to bring back gold reserves marks a strategic strengthening of India's economy. By increasing gold holdings domestically, India joins other global central banks in prioritizing gold as a safe-haven asset. This approach supports long-term stability, provides a buffer against economic uncertainties, and affirms India's economic resilience in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

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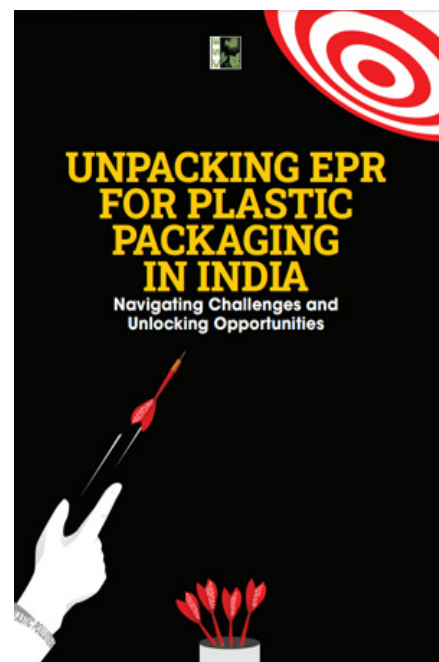
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## 5 Report on EPR by CSE for Plastic Packaging

**Context:** The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) recently released a report addressing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic packaging, spotlighting EPR as an effective measure to counter the escalating plastic waste crisis. With global plastic waste projected to triple by 2060 and less than 20% likely to be recycled, the report emphasizes the urgency of adopting comprehensive EPR policies.

### EPR for Plastic Packaging: Background and Key Components

- **Genesis:** The Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016 first introduced EPR in India, and in 2022, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change issued specific guidelines for plastic packaging under EPR.
- **Tenure:** These guidelines are to remain in effect until the fiscal year 2027–28.
- **Polluters in the Value Chain:** Under EPR, key players termed PIBOs—Producers, Importers, Brand Owners, and Manufacturers—are identified as "polluters." They are held accountable for collecting 100% of the plastic packaging they introduce to the market.



### EPR Compliance Mechanism:

- **EPR Certificates:** These certificates are generated by Plastic Waste Processors (PWP) to track the recycling and disposal of plastic. PIBOs must purchase EPR certificates from PWP to demonstrate compliance, effectively trading proof of their commitment to plastic waste recovery.

### Challenges in India's EPR System for Plastic Packaging:

1. **Lack of Monitoring for Importers:** Many importers operate without sufficient regulatory oversight, complicating enforcement.
2. **Distinguishing Waste Types:** Differentiating between packaging and non-packaging plastic waste remains challenging.
3. **Fraudulent Certificates:** There have been cases where PWP issue fake EPR certificates to PIBOs, undermining the system's integrity.





## Recommendations from the CSE Report:

To address these challenges, CSE suggests:

- **Fair EPR Pricing:** Ensure transparent and equitable pricing for EPR compliance.
- **Invalidate Fake Certificates:** Introduce stronger checks to prevent fraudulent EPR certificates.
- **Inclusion of the Informal Sector:** Acknowledge and integrate the informal waste management sector, which plays a significant role in waste collection and recycling.

## Understanding Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):

- **Definition:** EPR holds producers accountable for the environmental impact of their products throughout the product lifecycle, especially in take-back, recycling, and disposal stages.
- **Core Elements:** Key principles include producer responsibility, waste minimization, lifecycle management, and the "polluter pays" principle.
- **Applicable Waste Streams:** EPR policies can apply to various waste streams such as packaging, electronics, batteries, and hazardous waste.

## Role of Implementing Agencies:

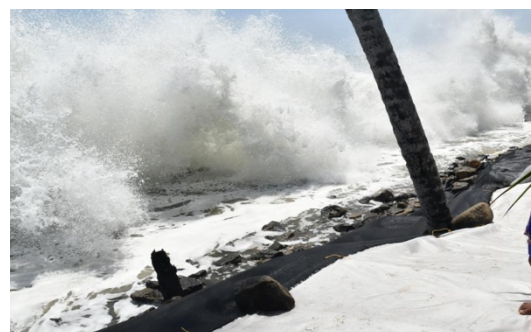
**Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs)** act as third-party entities that assist PIBOs in fulfilling EPR obligations, facilitating compliance, and promoting efficient waste management practices.

**Conclusion:** The CSE report underscores the importance of a strengthened EPR framework to address plastic pollution in India. By refining the EPR system, establishing fair pricing, improving monitoring mechanisms, and including the informal sector, India can better manage plastic waste, thus contributing to global efforts in sustainable plastic use and waste management.



## 6 New coastal zone plan of Kerala

**Context:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has approved the Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMPs) for ten coastal districts in Kerala, including Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Thrissur, and Ernakulam. This approval allows Kerala to implement the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2019 and avail relaxed norms under it, which is a prerequisite for sustainable coastal development.



### About Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP):

CZMPs are strategic frameworks for managing and regulating human activities along coastal areas to protect ecological resources while allowing sustainable use. Key components of CZMPs include:

- Zoning:** Coastal areas are categorized into various zones:
  - No Development Zones (NDZ):** Restricted areas where development is not permitted.
  - Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZs):** Specific zones with distinct regulations based on ecological and demographic considerations.
- Public Participation:** CZMP development includes consultations with local communities, ensuring that their perspectives and concerns are considered.

### Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Classification:

The CRZ Notification defines coastal areas and water zones within India's territorial limits, excluding the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. The notification was first issued in 1991, updated in 2011, and revised as CRZ 2019. The CRZ framework divides coastal areas into the following zones:

- CRZ-IA:** Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) such as mangroves, coral reefs, sand dunes, and salt marshes.
- CRZ-IB:** Intertidal zones, the areas between the Low Tide Line (LTL) and High Tide Line (HTL).
- CRZ-II:** Developed land areas near shorelines within existing municipal limits or legally designated urban areas.
- CRZ-III:**
  - CRZ-III A:** Areas with a population density above 2161 people per square kilometre. Here, the NDZ extends 50 meters from the HTL, provided the CZMP is approved.
  - CRZ-III B:** Areas with a population density below 2161 people per square kilometre. In these areas, the NDZ extends 200 meters from the HTL.
- CRZ-IV:** Water areas classified further into:
  - CRZ-IVA:** Includes water zones and tidal-influenced water bodies.
  - CRZ-IVB:** Reserved for fishing and aquaculture zones.

### Significance of CZMP Approval:

The approval of Kerala's CZMPs will enable the state to enforce CRZ 2019 guidelines, balancing ecological protection with sustainable development. This alignment allows Kerala to address its unique coastal needs while meeting the national framework for coastal regulation and environmental protection.

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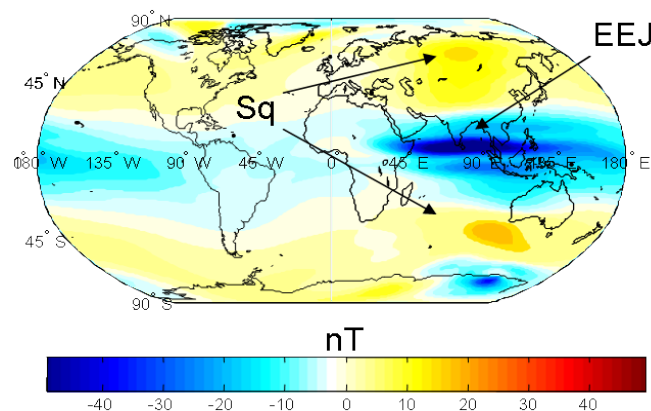
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## 7 Equatorial ElectroJet (EEJ)

**Context:** Indian scientists have developed a model to better understand the Equatorial Electrojet (EEJ), a powerful electric current flowing in Earth's ionosphere. This model is expected to enhance understanding of the EEJ's impact on orbiting satellites, Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)-based navigation and positioning, satellite communication links, and even power grids.



### About the Equatorial Electrojet (EEJ):

- **Definition:** The EEJ is an intense electric current, approximately 100 kiloamperes (kA), flowing in the Earth's ionosphere at around 100 km altitude along the magnetic equator.
- **Width:** The EEJ spans a few hundred kilometres in width, roughly 600 km from north to south.
- **Formation:** Occurs along Earth's magnetic equator where the magnetic field lines run parallel to the surface, leading to a high current density in the ionosphere.
- **Path and Direction:** The EEJ current flows eastward during the day and reverses at night. This change in direction produces a distinctive magnetic signature, detectable by ground and space-based magnetometers.

### Effects of the EEJ:

1. **Geomagnetic Field:** The EEJ intensifies Earth's geomagnetic field near the equator.
2. **Power Infrastructure:** Disruptions in the EEJ can impact power infrastructure and electricity monitoring systems in equatorial regions, highlighting the need for effective EEJ monitoring and prediction.

### Magnetic Equator vs. Geographic Equator:

- **Geographic Equator:** A fixed line at 0° latitude, dividing Earth into the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.
- **Magnetic Equator:** A fluctuating line of zero magnetic dip, where a magnetic needle experiences no vertical deflection. Unlike the geographic equator, it shifts slightly north and south over time due to changes in Earth's magnetic field.

This EEJ model by Indian scientists represents an important step towards improving satellite and navigation systems and protecting infrastructure from geomagnetic disturbances.

## 8 Black hole triple system

**Context:** Astronomers have discovered the first-ever "black hole triple system" in the V404 Cygni system, located about 8,000 light-years from Earth within the Milky Way galaxy. This discovery challenges existing theories about black hole formation and provides new insights into gravitational interactions in complex systems.



### About the V404 Cygni System:

- **Components:** The V404 Cygni was previously thought to be a binary black hole system, comprising a central black hole and a small star orbiting it closely. This close star orbits the black hole every 6.5 days and is actively being consumed by it.
- **Triple System Discovery:** Recent findings revealed a third component: a second, distant star orbiting the black hole at a vast distance, taking roughly 70,000 years to complete one orbit. This makes V404 Cygni the first confirmed triple black hole system.

### Significance of the Discovery:

1. **Challenges Supernova Theory:** Traditionally, black holes are thought to form from supernova explosions, which would likely have expelled a distant star. However, the presence of the distant star in V404 Cygni suggests an alternative formation mechanism.
2. **Direct Collapse Theory:** Scientists propose that the black hole in V404 Cygni likely formed through "direct collapse," where a massive star implodes quietly without an explosive supernova. This process would allow distant objects to remain gravitationally bound to the black hole.

### About Black Holes:

- **Definition:** A black hole is a region of space with extremely strong gravity, from which nothing, not even light, can escape.
- **Event Horizon:** The "surface" of a black hole, called the event horizon, marks the boundary beyond which escape velocity exceeds the speed of light.
- **Significant Milestones:** In 2019, the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) captured the first-ever image of a black hole, located at the center of the M87 galaxy, about 55 million light-years away.

This new discovery of a triple black hole system expands our understanding of black hole formation and the diversity of celestial systems.



## 9 Global tuberculosis (TB) Report 2024

**Context:** The World Health Organization (WHO) released its Global TB Report 2024. The report has acknowledged the tremendous progress India has made in closing the gap of missed TB cases since 2015.

### About the Global TB Report

The WHO's *Global TB Report* is an annual publication that provides detailed data on the global TB epidemic, tracking progress in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. It offers insights at global, regional, and national levels.



### Highlights of the 2024 Report:

- Rising TB Cases:** 8.2 million people were newly diagnosed with TB in 2023, the highest number recorded since WHO began TB monitoring in 1995. This is a significant increase from the 7.5 million cases reported in 2022.
- TB Mortality:** An estimated 1.25 million TB deaths occurred in 2023, a reduction from 1.32 million in 2022. While deaths have decreased from COVID-19 pandemic highs, TB fatalities far exceeded the 320,000 COVID deaths reported to WHO last year.
- Disproportionate Impact on LMICs:**
  - High-Burden Countries:** Around 87% of TB cases are in 30 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). India (26%), Indonesia (10%), China (6.8%), the Philippines (6.8%), and Pakistan (6.3%) together represent 56% of the global burden.
  - Demographics:** Of the total TB cases, 55% were men, 33% women, and 12% children and young adolescents.
- Major Risk Factors:** The report identifies five key risk factors contributing to new TB cases: **undernutrition, HIV infection, alcohol use disorders, smoking, and diabetes.**
- India's Progress in TB Control:**
  - High Case Detection:** India saw 27 lakh (2.7 million) TB cases in 2023, with 25.1 lakh (2.51 million) diagnosed and put on treatment. This has raised India's treatment coverage to 89% in 2023, up from 72% in 2015, significantly reducing the gap of undiagnosed cases.
  - Decline in TB Incidence:** India's TB incidence has dropped from 237 cases per lakh population in 2015 to 195 per lakh in 2023, reflecting a 17.7% decline.

**Conclusion:** This report underscores both progress in TB treatment coverage and the persistent challenges, especially in high-burden LMICs. Enhanced screening, targeted interventions, and addressing risk factors remain crucial in reducing TB cases and mortality further.

## 10 Indian Green Building Council

**Context:** Recently, the Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister announced that the upcoming Durgesh Aranya Zoological Park will become India's first zoo to earn certification from the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for sustainable and eco-friendly infrastructure.

**About Indian Green Building Council:**

The **Indian Green Building Council (IGBC)**, a division of the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** established in 2001, is India's foremost certification body for promoting sustainable building practices. IGBC's mission is to foster an eco-friendly built environment through certification, rating programs, and education on green construction.

**Key Roles and Activities of IGBC**

- **Green Building Rating Programs:** IGBC develops rating systems across various categories to certify sustainable buildings, assessing aspects like energy efficiency, water use, and health standards.
- **Certification Services:** The council provides certification for buildings meeting eco-friendly criteria.
- **Training Programs:** Green building training programs are conducted to increase awareness and expertise in sustainable construction practices.
- **Annual Event:** IGBC hosts the **Green Building Congress**, its annual conference, which gathers experts and stakeholders to discuss advancements in green building.

The IGBC rating system evaluates projects based on six primary categories:

- **Sustainable Station Facility**
- **Health, Hygiene, and Sanitation**
- **Energy Efficiency**
- **Water Efficiency**
- **Smart and Green Initiatives**
- **Innovation and Development**

Headquartered in **Hyderabad**, IGBC is also a board member of the **World Green Building Council**, representing India in global sustainability discussions at platforms like COP.

**Durgesh Aranya Zoological Park:**

The **Durgesh Aranya Zoological Park** in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, will be the first zoo in India certified by IGBC. Located in **Bankhandi** within the Dehra assembly constituency, the park features 34 enclosures approved by the **Central Zoo Authority (CZA)**, housing 73 animal species, including Asiatic lions, hog deer, crocodiles, monitor lizards, gharials, and a variety of birds. The project aligns with the state government's eco-tourism and sustainable development goals, enhancing Kangra's reputation as Himachal Pradesh's "Tourism Capital."

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