

# Centre identifies 75 tribal districts for focused TB interventions

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**In news**– The Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Central TB Division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have identified 75 tribal districts, where focused interventions will be run over the next few months with the aim to make them TB-free.

## **Aashwasan Campaign-**

- **The Aashwasan Campaign was undertaken by the Tribal Affairs and Health Ministries and supported by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) as a technical partner and Piramal Swasthya as the implementing partner.**
- The campaign to detect TB cases across 174 tribal districts started in January 2022 under the **Aashwasan Campaign**, under which door-to-door screening was done in over 68,000 villages. More than 9000 people tested positive and were placed under treatment as per government protocol.
- The data clearly indicated that tribal populations are more vulnerable to TB and other respiratory diseases compared to other population groups.

## **Three-pronged strategy-**

- The Health and Tribal Affairs ministries have decided on a three-pronged strategy to address the high incidence of TB in the selected 75 tribal districts, keeping with the **Union government's mission to make India TB-free by 2025.**
- **The districts selected are among those with a higher**

**proportion of tribal populations**, those that have not yet performed well in curbing TB, and those that reported relatively higher TB cases during the case-detection campaign.

- **This includes generating demand for TB services by engaging with community influencers like tribal leaders**, tribal healers, Panchayati Raj Institution members, Self-Help Groups and youth in the tribal areas, who are expected to help increase awareness on TB, its symptoms, spread and treatment processes and address the stigma and fear associated with the disease.

### What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

- TB is a contagious infection, in which the TB bacteria attack the lungs, but they can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain.
- Latent TB doesn't have symptoms, in which case, a skin or blood test can verify its presence.
- **Signs of active TB disease include:** A cough that lasts more than 3 weeks, Chest pain, Coughing up blood, Feeling tired all the time, Night sweats, Chills, Fever, Loss of appetite, Weight loss.
- While the term tuberculosis was coined by Johann Schonlein in 1834, it is believed that the infection has been around for 3 million years.
- In the 1700s, TB was called "the white plague" due to the pale appearance of the patients.
- TB was called "phthisis" in ancient Greece, "tabes" in ancient Rome, and "schachepheth" in ancient Hebrew.
- It was also known as "consumption" in the 1800s.
- During the Middle Ages, TB of the neck and lymph nodes was called "scofula" and was believed to be a different disease from TB in the lungs.
- According to WHO, each day, nearly 4000 lose their lives to TB and close to 28,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.

- WHO aims to end TB by 2030.

### **Initiatives by India & WHO-**

- India has 30% of the world's TB cases.
- TB has been made an essential part of **Comprehensive Primary Health Care** and is now integrated with Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs), the largest comprehensive health care and health protection programme in the world.
- **The National TB Management Framework** makes a strong case for elimination efforts from a health sector struggle to coordinate the collective endeavour of the government, the private sector, civil society, corporates and other stakeholders.
- **India has committed to the United Nations General Assembly to end TB by 2025, five years ahead** of the deadline given in the Sustainable Development Goals.
- India has experimented successfully with the public-private partnership model, which is now being replicated in more than 242 districts with the coalition of the government and the civil society (JEET Project).
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has announced the scheme-“Nikshay Poshan Yojana” for incentives for nutritional support to TB patients.
- The concerted effort of the **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)** has to its credit the world's biggest DOTS Therapy by treating nearly 20 million people in 15 years.
- WHO's End TB Strategy defines milestones (for 2020 and 2025) and targets (for 2030 and 2035) for reductions in TB cases and deaths.
- The targets for 2030 are a 90% reduction in the number of TB deaths and an 80% reduction in the TB incidence rate (new cases per 100 000 population per year) compared with levels in 2015.