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Current Affairs - 09 December 2025

CHARTING AN AGENDA ON THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

- Timed between Human Rights Day and **Universal Health Coverage Day**, the National Convention on Health Rights convened in New Delhi in December 2025, gathering hundreds of health professionals, activists and community leaders.
- Organised by the **Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA)**, the convention outlined a comprehensive rights-based vision for strengthening India's public health system.
- Its themes, privatisation, inequitable financing, exploitation of health workers and **structural discrimination**, highlight the systemic challenges shaping India's health landscape.

Privatisation and the Erosion of Public Health

- A central concern is the **rapid expansion of privatisation** across medical colleges and public hospitals.
- Public-private partnerships are increasingly transferring public institutions to private hands, threatening to weaken already fragile public services.
- For millions dependent on public health facilities, this shift risks deepening financial and social barriers.
- Commercial private health care, driven by domestic and foreign investments, has grown without adequate regulation.
- Despite the Clinical Establishments Act of 2010, **enforcement remains minimal**, resulting in overcharging, unnecessary procedures such as excessive caesarean sections, opaque pricing and recurring violations of patient rights.

Justice and Dignity for Health Workers

- The indispensable role of frontline health workers during COVID-19 underscores the urgency of addressing their ongoing precarity.
- Many doctors, nurses, paramedics and support staff continue to face **low wages, insecure contracts and inadequate social protection**.



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Medicines, Market Failures, Public Access and Revitalising Public Health Systems

- **Medicines, Market Failures and Public Access**
 - Medicines account for a significant portion of household medical expenses.
 - With **over 80% of** medicines outside price control, patients are burdened by high retail markups, irrational drug combinations and aggressive marketing practices.
 - The convention calls for **stronger regulatory oversight**, removal of GST on essential medicines and the expansion of public sector pharmaceutical production to ensure equitable access to essential drugs.
- **Revitalising Public Health Systems**
 - Strong public health systems remain essential for the **over 80 crore people** who depend on public provisioning.
 - The convention highlights successful community-led models and innovative state-level approaches illustrating that improved health systems are achievable through **decentralised planning, adequate** financing and community participation.
 - The vision advanced is of a health system that is publicly funded, publicly accountable and grounded in the right to health.

The Way Forward

- **Addressing Social Inequities in Health Care**
 - Entrenched social hierarchies continue to shape health outcomes in India. Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, LGBTQ+ persons and persons with disabilities experience **systemic discrimination and exclusion** in accessing care.
 - A session on gender and social justice emphasises embedding **inclusion, non-discrimination and equal access** within health systems.
 - Recognising health as a product of broader determinants, the convention links health with **food security, environmental degradation and climate change**, calling for intersectoral, equity-focused approaches.
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SUDDEN STRATOSPHERIC WARMING (SSW) EVENT



Sudden Stratospheric Warming event

- It refers to a **rapid rise in stratospheric temperatures** that weakens or distorts the **polar vortex** (a cold-air mass typically stabilized over the Arctic).
- **Occurrence of the event:**
 - It begins with **large-scale atmosphere waves** (called Rossby waves) getting pushed **higher into the atmosphere**.
 - These waves can “break” (like waves in the ocean) on top of the polar vortex and weaken it.
 - If waves are strong enough, the **winds of the polar vortex** can weaken so much that they can reverse **from being westerly to easterly**.
 - This leads to cold air descending and warming rapidly.
 - It can lead to a **displacement or splitting of the polar vortex**, so instead of cold air being locked above the polar region, it can push further south into the mid-latitudes.

What is Polar Vortex?

- It is a large area of **low pressure and cold air** surrounding both of the Earth’s poles.
- It extends **from the tropopause** (the dividing line between the stratosphere and troposphere) through the stratosphere and **into the mesosphere**.
- It **always exists near the poles**, but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter.
- Many times, during winter in the northern hemisphere, the polar vortex will expand, sending cold air southward with the jet stream.
 - Jet streams are relatively narrow bands of strong wind in the upper levels of the atmosphere.
- This occurs fairly regularly during wintertime and is often associated with large outbreaks of Arctic air in the United States.



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INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL



The 11th edition of India International Science Festival is being held in Panchkula, Haryana.

- It was launched in 2015.
- IISF aims to bring together **people and the scientific community** both nationally and internationally to collaborate, interact, and experience the joy of doing science for the wellbeing of India and humanity, guided by the spirit of swadeshi.
- **Mission of IISF:** Bridging **traditional knowledge systems with modern scientific research** thereby strengthening the link between India's indigenous knowledge heritage and contemporary scientific inquiry.

Key Facts about India International Science Festival 2025

- It is organised by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** and coordinated by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) Pune.
- The theme of India International Science Festival (IISF) 2025: **“Vigyan Se Samruddhi: for Aatmanirbhar Bharat.”**
- The event will feature technical and thematic sessions across science, technology and innovation.
- IISF 2025 will focus on **five broad themes:**
 - Science, Technology and Ecology of North-West India and the Himalayan Region;
 - Science for Society and Education;
 - Atmanirbhar Bharat through Science and Technology;
 - Biotechnology and Bio-economy; and
 - Integration of Traditional Knowledge with Modern Science.



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NATIONAL MISSION ON EDIBLE OILS



- It aims to **strengthen the country's oilseed ecosystem** and achieve self-reliance in edible oil production.
- **Targets of the mission**
 - It targets to increase the **area coverage and primary oilseed production**.
 - It targets **domestic edible oil production** and seeks to expand oilseed cultivation mainly by targeting rice and potato fallow lands.
- It has two-pronged approach:
 - **NMEO – Oil Palm (2021):**
 - It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**, with the aim to enhance the edible oilseeds production and oils availability in the country by area expansion and increasing Crude Palm Oil (CPO) production.
 - It is focused on **expanding oil palm cultivation** and increasing domestic crude palm oil output.
 - It focuses on **increasing production of seedlings** by establishment of seed garden, and nurseries of oil palm in order to assure **domestic availability of seedlings** as per target fixed under NMEO-OP.
 - **Implementation:** The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) serves as the nodal central authority.
 - **NMEO – Oilseeds (2024):**
 - It is aimed at **improving productivity, seed quality, processing, and market linkages** for traditional oilseed crops.
 - **Focus:** It focuses on increasing production of **key primary oilseed crops** such as Rapeseed-Mustard, Groundnut, Soybean, Sunflower, Sesamum, Safflower, Linseed and Castor.



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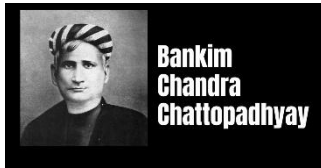


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- It also focuses on increasing collection and extraction efficiency from **secondary sources** like cottonseed, coconut, rice bran as well as Tree-Borne Oilseeds (TBOs).
- **Implementation:** It will be **implemented in all States/UTs** with the funding pattern of 60:40 in case of general States, Delhi & Puducherry and 90:10 in case of North-Eastern States and hill States, and 100% funding for UTs and Central Agencies.

WHO WAS BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY?



• Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, also known as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was one of the **greatest novelists and poets of**

India.

- He is famous as the **author of Vande Mataram**, the **national song of India**.
- His **famous novels** include **Durgeshnandini**, **Kapalkundala** (1866), **Mrinalini** (1869), **Vishbriksha** (1873), **Chandrsekhar** (1877), **Rajani** (1877), **Rajsimha** (1881), and **Devi Chaudhurani** (1884).
- Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's **most famous novel** was **Anand Math** (1882).
 - It was set in the **background** of the **Sannyasi Rebellion** in the **late 18th century**.
 - Anand Math **contained** the song **“Vande Mataram”**, which was later adopted as the national song.
 - The patriotic song was **written in Sanskrit**.
 - In the year 1896, Rabindranath Tagore sang this melodic poem for the first time at the **Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress**.
 - It was **officially adopted** as the **national song** by the **Constituent Assembly of India** on **24th January 1950**.
 - He is often regarded as the **“Sahitya Samrat” (Emperor of Literature)** in **Bengali literature**.



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NTA FAILS TO INSPIRE CONFIDENCE, SAYS HOUSE COMMITTEE

- NTA was established in 2017 as an autonomous, self-sustaining organisation under the Education Ministry (formerly HRD Ministry).
- It is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and comes under the RTI Act.
- Before its creation, UGC, CBSE, and central universities like DU and JNU conducted their own entrance exams.
- **Exams Conducted by NTA**
 - NTA conducts India's major entrance examinations, including:
 - **Top Undergraduate Entrance Exams**
 - JEE Main – Engineering admissions
 - NEET-UG – Medical admissions
 - CUET-UG – Admissions to undergraduate programmes in central universities
 - Over 50 lakh candidates appear for these three exams annually.
 - **Other Major Exams**
 - CUET-PG – Postgraduate admissions
 - UGC-NET – Eligibility for assistant professor, JRF, and PhD
 - CSIR UGC-NET – PhD admission in science disciplines
 - CMAT, Hotel Management JEE, GPAT
 - Entrance exams for DU, JNU, IIFT, ICAR, and others

House Panel Flags Serious Concerns Over NTA's Functioning

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education has sharply criticised the National Testing Agency (NTA), stating that it has “not inspired much confidence” and must urgently improve its performance.
- The panel noted chronic delays, errors, and administrative lapses in major national examinations.



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- **Repeated Delays and Exam Irregularities**
 - The committee observed that NTA delayed CUET results for multiple years, disrupting university admissions and academic calendars.
 - Out of 14 exams conducted in 2024, at least five faced major issues:
 - UGC-NET, CSIR-NET, NEET-PG were postponed
 - NEET-UG faced paper leaks
 - CUET results were delayed
 - JEE Main 2025 had 12 incorrect questions withdrawn after answer key errors
 - The panel warned that such incidents erode students' trust in the testing system.
 - **NTA's Financial Surplus Should Be Used for Capacity Building**
 - NTA collected ₹3,512.98 crore in six years and spent ₹3,064.77 crore, leaving a surplus of ₹448 crore.
 - The committee recommended that this money be used to:
 - Build in-house capability to conduct exams independently
 - Strengthen regulatory oversight of outsourced vendors
 - **Preference for Pen-and-Paper Exams**
 - Citing CBSE and UPSC's decades-long track record, the panel expressed support for pen-and-paper exams, noting they have been "leak-proof for several years" — implying computer-based testing may be more vulnerable.
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INS GHARIAL



(Large).

- INS Gharial (L23) is a **Magar-class amphibious warfare vessel** of the Indian Navy.
- It is the second indigenously built Landing Ship Tank



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- It was built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers.
 - It is **one of the largest ships** of the Indian Navy.
 - It was commissioned as a part of the Eastern Fleet under the **Eastern Naval Command**.
 - It is capable of carrying **helicopters and Landing Craft Assault (LCA)**.
 - It is also armed with guns and rocket launchers.
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UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY



- It is the world's highest-level **decision-making body on the environment**.
 - **Member Countries:** It the universal **membership of all** UN Member States and the full involvement of major groups and stakeholders.
 - It is organised **every 2 years**.
 - **Background:** UNEA was created in 2012, as an outcome of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (**Rio+20**), held in Brazil.
 - **Functions of UN Environment Assembly:**
 - It sets the global **environmental agenda**, provides overarching policy guidance, and defines policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges.
 - It undertakes policy review, dialogue and the exchange of experiences, sets the strategic guidance on the **future direction of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
 - It fosters partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization.
 - **Seventh UNEA session (2025) Theme:** "Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet".
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