

Tamil Nadu launches shorter treatment regimen for TB Preventive Therapy

T.N. is now the first State in the country to procure the medicines for household contacts of TB patients. Medicines under the new treatment have been procured at a cost of ₹9.41 crore

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma. Subramanian launched 3HP, a shorter treatment regimen for TB Preventive Therapy, at the Tamil Nadu Tuberculosis Summit held on Friday.

With this, Tamil Nadu is the first State in the country to procure the medicines for household contacts of patients with TB. The new treatment is for household contacts aged over 18, and medicines had been procured at a cost of ₹9.41 crore.

In this new treatment, the duration of the prevention therapy is reduced to three months – three tablets per week for 12 weeks. This was started in Tiruvallur as a pilot project and is being extended to all districts. "In Tiruvallur, 35% to 47% of family contacts were found to be positive for latent TB infection," Asha Frederick, State TB Officer, said.



Health Minister Ma. Subramanian releasing the State Strategic Plan 2.0 at the Tamil Nadu Tuberculosis Summit on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Earlier, the duration of treatment was 180 days and ensuring daily consumption of drugs was a challenge. "This is a part of the multi-pronged approach in our strategy to reach elimination of TB," she added.

He noted that there were 1,08,344 new cases of TB in the State in 2019, of which 91,405 were cured. In 2020, 68,922 persons were diagnosed with TB and 57,391 were cured. In the following year, there were 82,680 newly diagnosed cases, of which 68,810 were cured. In 2022, there were 91,592

new cases and 50,592 were cured.

Decreasing incidence

The National TB Elimination Programme aims at fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving TB-free Tamil Nadu by 2025, five years ahead of the global targets. The objective is to decrease the incidence of TB in Tamil Nadu to 40/one lakh population in high-burden districts and to 10/one lakh population in low-burden districts by 2025.

The Minister also re-

leased the State Strategic Plan 2.0 and a TB awareness video. The State Prevalence Survey conducted by the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis was disseminated in the summit, organised by the Tamil Nadu State TB Cell with the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Soumya Swaminathan, former Chief Scientist of WHO; Health Secretary Gangandee Singh Bedi; and Shilpa Prabhakar Satish, Mission Director of National Health Mission, Tamil Nadu, were present.

Among the elite

India's presidency of the G-20 gives it additional heft at the G-7 summit

As he left for Japan on Friday to attend the G-7 summit – India is a special invitee – Prime Minister Narendra Modi called India's attendance “particularly meaningful” this year. While Mr. Modi was referring specifically to India's G-20 presidency, and aligning the G-20 agenda with Japan's agenda for the G-7 summit is key, there are other reasons for India's presence to stand out at the conversations this weekend. Japan, as host, has taken a fairly tough position on Russia, with its envoy to India saying that the “message to Putin” must be that Russia will have to “pay” for its war in Ukraine. While all G-7 countries – the U.S., the U.K., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the EU – are united in their efforts to sanction Russia further, it will be left to India, which has walked a line of fine balance thus far, to temper some of that language, particularly if joint communiques are sought with the outreach countries including South Korea, Australia, Brazil, Vietnam, Indonesia, Comoros and the Cook Islands. Neither Russia nor China, the “elephants in the room”, are actually invited, and India's position will be all the more important for the “Voice of the Global South” that Mr. Modi has committed to amplify, in conversations about the impacts of sanctions imposed by the G-7 countries on the developing world, including on food, fertilizer and energy security. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has decided to accept Japan's invitation to attend the G-7 summit in person, and all eyes in India will be on a possible meeting between him and Mr. Modi, which would be a first since the Ukraine war began. The G-7 countries will keenly watch whether Mr. Modi extends an invitation to Mr. Zelenskyy to address the G-20 summit in September.

Apart from the Russia-Ukraine tussle, India will be at the forefront as G-7 and G-7+ countries discuss debt sustainability and helping countries such as Sri Lanka to avoid a “debt trap”. It will also be a key speaker on issues such as building supply chain reliability, spearheading alternative energy coalitions, and seeking infrastructure and development aid in the region. Finally, India's unique voice, as a nuclear power that is not a member of the Non Proliferation Treaty regime, yet has built an impeccable record in nuclear restraint, will be heard as Japan seeks to send a united message on non-proliferation from Hiroshima which was devastated by an American atomic bomb in 1945. While the heavy lifting for the G-7 summit will be done by Japan and member countries, they are still seen as a small and “elitist” grouping, and India's heft as a developing power combined with its G-20 presidency make it the significant “other” this year, that can leave its mark in making the process more inclusive.

RBI to pull out ₹2,000 notes from circulation

“Deposit into bank accounts can be made in the usual manner, that is, without restrictions and subject to extant instructions and other applicable statutory provisions,” the RBI said. For operational convenience and to avoid disruption of regular activities of banks, exchange of ₹2,000 notes into banknotes of other denominations can be made up to a limit of ₹20,000 at a time at any bank, starting from May 23. To complete the exercise in a time-bound manner and provide adequate time to the members of the public, all banks have been directed to provide deposit and/or exchange facility for ₹2,000 notes till September 30.

The RBI has issued separate guidelines to the banks. The facility for exchange of ₹2,000 notes up to the limit of ₹20,000 at a time will also be available at the 19 Regional Offices of the RBI having “Issue Departments” from May 23. Banks have been asked to stop issuing ₹2,000 notes with immediate effect.

“Members of the public are encouraged to utilise the time up to September 30, 2023 to deposit and/or exchange the ₹2,000 notes,” the RBI statement added. The printing of ₹2,000 notes was stopped in 2018-19.

Even limited arsenic exposure can mar cognitive ability: study

It caused a reduction in grey matter in the brain and affected concentration in children and young adults, say researchers who worked with 1,014 participants from five regions across India

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Though it is well known that ingesting high levels of arsenic from contaminated groundwater in India has been linked to a range of ailments, a recent peer-reviewed study suggests that even low levels of arsenic consumption may impact cognitive function in children, adolescents, and young adults.

The research study, which is part of a bigger investigation into how a range of environmental and biological factors affect neurological and cognitive development in young people, also found that those exposed to arsenic had reduced grey matter (brain tissue that is vital to cognitive functions) and weaker connections within key regions of the brain that enable concentration, switching between tasks, and temporary storage of information.



A common strategy to prevent contamination is to encourage piped water access rather than groundwater extraction. FILE PHOTO

"Chronic exposure to arsenic could be creating a 'silent pandemic' affecting large portions of the global population," say the authors in the study published in the latest issue of the peer-reviewed journal, *JAMA Network Open*.

For their research, the scientists linked urine samples (to estimate arsenic exposure) performance in a battery of computerised tests (that evaluate cognitive function) and brain-

images (that picture various regions of the brain) of 1,014 participants from five regions across India.

Arsenic exposure, previous studies have shown, is particularly harmful to the poor.

However, a scientist associated with the study told *The Hindu* that the impact of arsenic in impairing cognition at an individual level was "limited". The effect was more pronounced when individuals

were considered as part of a collective, the scientist said.

Mapping brains

"We didn't set out to investigate the link between arsenic exposure and brain function... it emerged from the C-Veda data. Going ahead, we'd like to more thoroughly investigate the degree to which arsenic affects the brain. We are also looking at the role of a host of other environmental factors, in separate studies, such as air pollution," Nilakshi Vaidya, clinical psychologist and lead author of the study, told *The Hindu* in a phone conversation.

Since the 1990s, both the Central and State governments in Bihar and West Bengal have sought to address arsenic contamination. A common strategy employed is to encourage piped water access rather than groundwater extraction and install arsenic removal plants.

SC back to its full strength of 34 as CJI administers oath to two new judges

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Friday administered the oath of office to Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and K.V. Viswanathan, bringing back the court to its full sanctioned strength of 34 judges.

Justices Mishra and Viswanathan would replace Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and M.R. Shah, both of whom had retired earlier in May.

May 19 also saw the court bid farewell to Justices K.M. Joseph, Ajay Rastogi and V. Ramasubramanian, who are all retiring in June during the summer vacation. Friday was the last working day of the Supreme Court before it goes into recess until reopening on July 2.

Justices Mishra and Viswanathan were sworn in as



New chapter: CJI D.Y. Chandrachud administers oath of office to senior advocate K.V. Viswanathan in New Delhi, on Friday. PTI

judges in the presence of the full court in an auditorium filled with members of the Bar. The government had cleared their appointments in record speed. The Collegium had recommended them for appointment to the Supreme Court on May 16. The government's notifications were published on May 18 and coincided with the first day in office of the new Law Minister, Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Justice Viswanathan would be in line to be the 58th Chief Justice of India in August 2030, succeeding Justice J.B. Pardiwala as top judge. He is also only the ninth lawyer to be elevated directly to the Supreme Court Bench.

Justice Mishra, who hails from Chhattisgarh, was the Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court before his appointment to the Supreme Court.

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