



Sanskriti IAS



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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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TOPICS:-

1. The alarming rise of medicalisation in India

(GS Paper I - Society, GS Paper III - Science and Technology)

2. Mapping the legislative vacuum in India's heat crisis

(GS Paper III - Environment, GS Paper II - Governance)

3. Food worth ₹1.55 lakh cr. wasted annually

(GS Paper I - Society, GS Paper II - Governance)

DELHI CENTRE:
636, Mukherjee Nagar
New Delhi-110009

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

 **9555-124-124**

 **sanskritiias.com**

1. THE ALARMING RISE OF MEDICALISATION IN INDIA

(GS Paper I - Society, GS Paper III - Science and Technology)

This editorial ‘**The alarming rise of medicalisation in India**’ was published in **The Hindu** on 15th Apr 2026, highlights how India’s **obesity crisis** is increasingly being framed through **market-driven pharmaceutical solutions** instead of durable lifestyle and public-health responses.

Obesity crisis and pharmaceutical turn

- India faces a large **obesity** burden alongside **metabolic** disorders such as diabetes, hypertension, fatty liver disease and dyslipidaemia, with childhood obesity also rising rapidly.
- The editorial links this trend to **ultra-processed** foods, **sedentary** lifestyles, shrinking open spaces, chronic stress, alcohol use, poor sleep and a South Asian “thin-fat” predisposition.
- Excess weight earlier carried some social association with **prosperity**, while public **discourse** stayed muted even as overweight and obesity rose over the past two decades.
- The entry of **tirzepatide** and cheaper **semaglutide** in India revealed not just clinical demand but a large and lucrative anti-obesity therapeutic market.

Marketing, evidence gaps and treatment cascade

- Though prescription drugs cannot be directly sold to the public, companies increasingly use **surrogate advertising** and **influencer** endorsements framed as public awareness or independent journalism to shape perception.
- Regulatory restraint on **newspaper** ads and **billboards** came late, by which time subtle and persistent messaging had already begun reshaping public expectations and clinical practice.
- New drugs are marketed as **breakthroughs** while their **uncertainties** receive less attention, blurring the line between scientific progress and commercial enthusiasm.
- Anti-obesity drugs acting on **GLP-1** pathways reduce not only fat but also **lean mass**, creating documented risks of sarcopenia unless supported by protein intake and resistance training.

- Patients may reach lower **BMI** while compromising **strength**, metabolic resilience and long-term health, so weight-loss outcomes alone can be misleading.
- The editorial warns of a therapeutic **cascade** in which one intervention creates side effects that require another **therapy**, making medicalisation self-reinforcing.

Structural drivers and needed shift in perspective

- One neglected structural driver is the rapid growth of **ultra-processed** foods, while **policy** responses such as front-of-package warning labels continue to face delays.
- The system has become paradoxical as one **industry** promotes consumption patterns driving metabolic disease and another profits by selling **remedies** for the resulting conditions.
- Clinical care must treat medicines as **adjuncts**, not substitutes for **lifestyle** foundations such as nourishing diets, physical activity, restorative sleep and stress management.
- Faster inclusion of new drugs in **guidelines** raises questions about whether **recommendations** rest on robust long-term evidence or are being shaped by market forces.
- Greater **transparency** on risks and stronger **evidence-based** advocacy are essential if the medical profession is to restore lifestyle modification to the centre of care.
- The Air India **BMI** episode is presented as a warning that even well-meaning **fitness** measures can deepen a cycle of measurement, medication and market dependence.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Need for a prevention-centric public health strategy

- **Regulatory reset:** Obesity control cannot rely mainly on drugs, because unchecked marketing of unhealthy foods and wellness claims, as seen in HFSS food promotion, keeps expanding the disease pool at source.
- **Food environment reform:** Public policy must make healthy choices easier by improving school meals, mid-day meal norms, workplace canteens and neighbourhood access to affordable nutritious food.
- **Clear consumer information:** Front-of-pack labelling, as adopted in Chile, can reduce information asymmetry by helping people identify high sugar, salt and fat products before regular consumption habits form.

- **Urban design response:** Walkable streets, safe parks, cycling tracks and public recreation spaces, as seen in Chennai's pedestrian reforms, can convert physical activity into a routine social habit.
- **Primary care orientation:** Screening, counselling and early lifestyle guidance through primary healthcare, as under Ayushman Bharat HWCs, can address obesity before costly long-term metabolic disorders emerge.
- **Behavioural change support:** Prevention requires sustained community campaigns on diet, sleep, stress and exercise, as attempted under Eat Right India, because knowledge alone rarely changes behaviour.
- **Whole-of-government approach:** A credible anti-obesity strategy must align health, food regulation, education, urban planning and taxation, as with POSHAN Abhiyaan, so prevention becomes a governance priority.

2. MAPPING THE LEGISLATIVE VACUUM IN INDIA'S HEAT CRISIS

(GS Paper III - Environment, GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial 'Mapping the legislative vacuum in India's heat crisis' was published in **The Hindu** on 15th Apr 2026, highlights how India's worsening **heat emergency** exposes deep **legal, labour and fiscal gaps** that leave vulnerable workers without enforceable protection.

Heat as a structural justice crisis

- Extreme **heat** has shifted from a seasonal hardship to a national **crisis**, spreading beyond arid zones into coastal corridors and temperate regions.
- With over 57% of districts now classified as **heat-prone**, the editorial presents rising temperatures as a systemic **public-health** and governance challenge.
- For affluent groups, heat is buffered through private **cooling** infrastructure, but for informal workers it becomes a violation of **life** and livelihood.
- Construction workers, street vendors and delivery workers lack **cooling** autonomy, so even small temperature rises sharply reduce **productivity** and daily income.
- The burden is unequally distributed across **class, caste** and gender, making heat exposure a question of "thermal injustice," not mere weather discomfort.

Frontline vulnerability and legal vacuum

- Sanitation workers and waste pickers face extreme **micro-climates** created by ambient heat and toxic **fumes**, sometimes several degrees hotter than surrounding areas.
- Heated waste and absent protective gear expose workers to severe **burns** and chronic **occupational** risks, showing how degrading work and climate danger intersect.
- Gig workers operate under **algorithmic** pressure, while construction labourers and vendors suffer both metabolic **stress** and immediate income loss during red-alert periods.
- The **Factories Act, 1948** protects indoor workrooms, but the **OSHWC Code 2020** effectively leaves outdoor heat without a binding statutory floor.
- Though Section **23** permits notification of weather standards, the Centre retains broad **discretion** and is not required to impose mandatory protections.
- Since heatwaves are absent from the **Notified National Disaster** list, States remain trapped by the **10%** spending cap in disaster response funds.
- The editorial treats the issue primarily as one of **occupational safety**, not merely episodic **disaster** management.

Legislative and policy correction

- The first step is accepting the **16th Finance Commission** recommendation to include heatwaves and lightning in the **National Disaster** list for 2026-31.
- Such inclusion would unlock the **NDRF** and convert current fiscal **restrictions** into wider relief and adaptation capacity for States.
- Early warnings should become binding **mandates** for district administrations rather than non-binding **advisories** with weak enforcement value.
- The **Heat Index** should replace temperature alone as the main legal **trigger**, so coastal humidity risks are not ignored in safety protocols.
- The government should use Section **23** powers to notify binding **work-rest** cycles and require insulated flasks and heat-safe protective equipment.
- After the Supreme Court's **Rajitsinh** ruling, the "Right to Cool" should be treated as part of **Article 21**, requiring cooling shelters and free water kiosks.
- High-risk sectors and the **gig economy** need specific protections, including curbs on delivery penalties and **compensation** for heat-related income loss.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Role of climate-resilient urban planning in reducing heat vulnerability

- **Built environment correction:** Heat vulnerability is intensified by concrete-heavy urbanisation, as reflected in India's rising **urban heat island** concern, so city planning must reduce heat retention, not merely respond after exposure.
- **Cool roof expansion:** Large-scale adoption of cool roofs and heat-reflective materials, as seen in **Telangana's Cool Roof Policy 2023-28**, can reduce indoor temperatures, especially in dense low-income settlements.
- **Urban greening:** Trees, shaded streets and green corridors can lower local temperatures; India's **URDPFI** norm of over 12% green cover shows why greening must become a heat-mitigation priority.
- **Water-sensitive design:** Public drinking water points, restored water bodies and heat-resilient layouts, as reflected in city-level **water-body rejuvenation** efforts, can reduce exposure stress during prolonged extreme heat.
- **Mobility protection:** Bus stops, markets, footpaths and transit hubs need shaded design, because exposed **public spaces** intensify thermal risk for commuters, vendors and outdoor workers.
- **Settlement upgrading:** Informal settlements need heat-sensitive housing and ventilation; **Ahmedabad's cool-roof interventions** in low-income communities show how simple design changes can improve thermal comfort.
- **Planning integration:** Heat resilience should be embedded in master plans, building by-laws and municipal governance; the **URDPFI Guidelines** and growing city climate plans already point in that direction.

3. FOOD WORTH ₹1.55 LAKH CR. WASTED ANNUALLY

(GS Paper I - Society, GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial 'Food worth ₹1.55 lakh cr. wasted annually' was published in **The Hindu** on 15th Apr 2026 and highlights how **India's massive food waste** reflects systemic **supply-chain failures**, deepens hunger and imposes major ecological and ethical costs.

Scale and contradiction of food waste

- UNEP Food Waste Index 2024 estimates global **food** waste at 1.05 billion tonnes, with households causing 60%, food services 28% and retail 12%.
- The editorial treats food **loss** as a systemic **failure** rooted in supply chains, policy gaps and consumption cultures that normalise discard.
- Around 783 million face **hunger**, while over 3.1 billion cannot afford a healthy **diet**, making large-scale waste morally indefensible.
- India ranks second globally in **waste**, with 78-80 million tonnes of post-harvest crop and food worth **₹1.55 lakh crore** lost annually.
- India's per capita household **wastage** is 55 kg annually, lower than the U.S. and Germany, yet its **deprivation** burden makes the contradiction sharper.
- India ranks 111th out of 125 in the Global **Hunger** Index and about 194 million people do not get enough **food**.

Structural inefficiencies and ecological cost

- Punjab shows how high **production** can coexist with high **wastage**, as significant quantities perish before reaching consumers.
- In Punjab, food **loss** is driven by extreme weather and serious **inefficiencies** in storage and logistics.
- Over 8,200 tonnes of foodgrains spoiled in **FCI** storage facilities in Punjab between 2019 and 2024, making it the highest in **India**.
- A **NITI Aayog** report identifies weak covered storage, poor cold-chain investment, delayed mechanisation and lack of grading and scientific **packaging** as key bottlenecks.
- Food **waste** accounts for 8-10% of annual global greenhouse-gas **emissions**, making it an environmental as well as human crisis.
- If food waste were a **country**, it would be the third-largest **emitter** after China and the U.S., while landfill methane intensifies warming.
- Every wasted morsel also squanders **water** and **labour**; one kilogram of rice uses about 5,000 litres of water, worsening Punjab's groundwater stress.

Corrective pathway

- India must treat **cold-chain** expansion as food-security **infrastructure**, especially in major producing States such as Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.
- The editorial supports legal **redistribution** of surplus edible food, backed by tax **incentives** for donating businesses and institutions.

- Post-harvest **losses** begin at the farm gate, so farmers and producer organisations need drying systems, hermetic storage and mobile **cold** units.
- The **Jute Packaging Materials Act** should be reviewed so grain storage can shift from porous sacks to modern hermetic **solutions**.
- India lacks a consolidated **database** on retail and hospitality food waste, so mandatory measurement and public **reporting** are needed for large entities.
- The editorial calls for reviving the civic **ethic** of treating **anna** as sacred, not as religious instruction but as shared public responsibility.
- The final shift must be from passive **awareness** to collective national **action** that reduces food waste through systems, incentives and values.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Food waste, nutrition security and sustainable development

- **Nutrition linkage:** Food waste is not only a logistics problem, because every avoidable loss weakens the larger goal of ensuring adequate and nutritious food for all, as recognised in **SDG 12.3**.
- **Human development cost:** In a country facing persistent hunger and malnutrition, wastage reflects poor conversion of agricultural output into real nutritional security for vulnerable populations, despite missions like **POSHAN Abhiyaan**.
- **Welfare convergence:** Better alignment between agriculture, storage, public distribution, school feeding and community nutrition programmes, as seen in **PM POSHAN**, can redirect food systems toward human well-being.
- **Surplus redistribution:** Safe recovery and timely redistribution of edible surplus, as attempted by **Feeding India** and the **IFSA** network, can strengthen support for urban poor and vulnerable households.
- **Resource efficiency:** Reducing food waste improves sustainability because it conserves land, water, energy, labour and transport resources already embedded in food production, which is the core logic of **SDG 12.3**.
- **Institutional responsibility:** Schools, hostels, hospitals, weddings and large food businesses should become accountable nodes in a national effort to minimise avoidable wastage, with structured recovery channels like **Surplus Food Distribution** models.
- **Development perspective:** Treating food waste as part of nutrition security and sustainable development makes the issue broader, linking farm efficiency, social justice, environmental protection and governance reform under the **SDG** framework.