

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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GS 2: HEALTH

THE HINDU PAGE: 05

16 fixed dose combination drugs, including antibiotics, banned

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Stating that certain drug cocktails lack therapeutic justification and could pose risks to patients, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has banned 16 fixed dose combination medications in public interest.

The prohibited drugs include certain dermatological preparations, analgesic and antispasmodic medicines, and antibiotic-based formulations that have been deemed irrational or unsafe.

A fixed dose combination (FDC) is a medicine

containing two or more active drugs combined in a fixed ratio in a single dosage form. While some FDCs improve treatment compliance and therapeutic effectiveness, irrational combinations may be ineffective or harmful.

Among the banned formulations are combinations such as acetyl salicylic acid with ethoheptazine; dicyclomine, paracetamol and clidinium bromide; dicyclomine, paracetamol, clidinium bromide and chlordiazepoxide; gliclazide with chromium picolinate; and paracetamol with lignocaine.

Several antibiotic-based

combinations have also been prohibited, including amoxicillin with serratiopeptidase, amoxicillin with serratiopeptidase and lactobacillus sporogenes, amoxicillin with cloxacillin, lactic acid bacillus and serratiopeptidase, cefadroxyl with probenecid, and cefuroxime with serratiopeptidase.

The banned list includes several formulations containing combinations of aloe vera or aloe extract with ingredients such as Vitamin E, jojoba oil, orange oil, wheat germ oil, tea tree oil, allantoin and D-panthenol.

(With PTI inputs)

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THE HINDU

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What does the U.S.-Iran agreement say?

What are the main provisions of the US-Iran memorandum of understanding signed on June 15? What commitments have the two countries made under the deal regarding nuclear activities and sanctions? How does the issue of Iran's frozen assets feature in the agreement? Why is Israel opposed to the agreement? What are the main sticking points?

Stanly Johny

The story so far:

After 40 days of war and more than 60 days of intense negotiations, the U.S. and Iran, on June 15, agreed to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to end the war and start more substantive negotiations on contentious issues. The deal has kicked off a geopolitical storm, with Israel opposing it firmly, causing an unlikely rift between Washington and Tel Aviv. U.S. President Donald Trump, who ripped up the 2015 Iran deal, which was signed by the Obama administration, calling it the "worst deal" in America's history, is facing backlash at home for the concessions Washington has made to Tehran. Iran's leadership claims that they defeated the U.S. and Israel in the war and that the terms of the MoU underscored their victory. While the agreement has brought lingering post-ceasefire skirmishes between the U.S. and Iran to an end, this is not a final settlement.

What does the deal say?

The opening article of the MoU calls for a ceasefire on all fronts, "including Lebanon". It calls on both sides to respect each other's sovereignty and to refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs. The U.S. has lifted its naval blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran has taken steps to remove its restrictions on the Strait of Hormuz. The text calls on Iran to remove all impediments, including mines, within 30 days of the signing of the deal.

One of the contentious issues during the talks was Iran's demand for access to its frozen funds and for war reparations. The text says Iran will have its funds unfrozen contingent on progress in the second phase of the talks, without specifying the amount or timeline. Iranian state media have reported that Iran has demanded that \$24 billion be unfrozen. Mr. Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance have said that no American money will be paid to Iran. That could be technically correct as the frozen funds are Iranian assets held in different banks across the world under U.S. sanctions. If the U.S. lifts the sanctions, countries and banks could make the transfer.

The U.S. would also work with other regional countries to draw up a plan for Iran's reconstruction and redevelopment, which would involve \$300 billion in financing. Iran will have access to these funds if a final settlement is reached.

What commitments has Iran made?

Iran, on its part, has pledged never to make a nuclear weapon. This has been the official Iranian position for years. The Iranians had made the same pledge in the 2015 Obama-Iran deal as well. While more contentious issues such as Iran's possession of 60% enriched uranium (which is a step away from weapons-grade purity) and Iran's enrichment capabilities are to be discussed in the second phase, according to the text released by the White House,

Both sides also agreed to maintain the status quo until they reach the final deal — Iran will not expand its nuclear programme and the U.S. will not impose additional sanctions and deploy more troops to the region



A woman weeps as she sits on the rubble at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Qennarit on June 20. AFP

both sides have mutually agreed to "downblend" (dilute) Iran's enriched material under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Other issues such as enrichment in Iran and the country's nuclear needs will be discussed as part of the final deal.

Both sides also agreed to maintain the status quo until they reach the final deal — Iran will not expand its nuclear programme and the U.S. will not impose additional sanctions and deploy more troops to the region. Upon signing the MoU, the U.S. will issue waivers for the export of Iran's crude oil, petroleum products, and other derivatives, and all associated services, including banking, transactions, insurances, and transportation.

Where does Israel stand?

For Israel, the U.S.-Iran deal appears to be a major strategic setback. Israel launched this war with the U.S. on February 28 to bring about regime change in Iran, destroy its nuclear and missile capabilities, and stop the country from supporting its non-state allies such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis. Israel had been a big proponent of a war on Iran — officials of former U.S. administrations had said Israel had pushed previous Presidents to launch strikes on Iran. After the attacks by Hamas in Israel on October 7, 2023, the Zionist state fought a multi-front war against Hamas, Hezbollah, and the then Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad — all Iranian allies. The fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 weakened Iran's regional standing further, as Syria was a key link between Hezbollah and Tehran. In June 2025, Israel bombed Iran aimed at destroying

The war in Lebanon posed the first test to the deal on Saturday when Iran announced that it had closed the Strait of Hormuz, citing Israeli attacks on Lebanon

its nuclear facilities. The U.S. joined in, but after a single strike, Mr. Trump enforced a ceasefire between Israel and Iran. But the 12-day war, as it is called, was only a trial run.

What Tel Aviv wanted was regime change in Tehran, which it thought would reshape West Asia with Israel being at the centre of a new unipolar regional order. But this project collapsed as Iran survived the 40 days of bombing. Iran's stranglehold of the Strait of Hormuz and its refusal to make concessions on the nuclear issue forced the U.S. to diverge from Israel's maximalist demands and take a more narrowed-down approach to end the war and address the nuclear question diplomatically. But to address these issues diplomatically after the war's failure, the U.S. would have to give substantial economic concessions to Tehran. As the U.S. is doing just that, Israel, increasingly isolated and frustrated, fears that the deal would render Iran conventionally stronger, altering the regional balance of power.

Why does Lebanon matter?

Despite being cut off from the Iran-U.S. diplomatic process, Israel still possesses a key card — Lebanon. Israeli troops have occupied parts of Southern Lebanon, a Hezbollah stronghold. Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shia militia-cum-political party, is a close ally of Iran. To have a ceasefire in Lebanon, which

has been mentioned in the MoU, Mr. Trump should get Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on board. Since Israeli troops are present in South Lebanon, Hezbollah, which is far from defeated, is targeting the occupying force. And in the name of striking Hezbollah, Israel is bombing Lebanon.

Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz have said that the Israeli troops will not pull back from Southern Lebanon. This keeps Lebanon as a flashpoint with a potential for escalation. An Iranian delegation was supposed to travel to Geneva to start direct negotiations for the second phase on June 19, but Iran called off talks, citing Israel's attacks on Lebanon. Mr. Netanyahu seems determined to use the Lebanon card, making the U.S.-Iran peace process complicated. Israel's continued attacks in Lebanon and its public criticism of the Iran MoU have triggered rare public criticism of Israel from top American officials, including Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance.

Will the agreement hold?

Both Mr. Trump and the Iranians seem determined to take the peace process to the next step. Mr. Trump, who bombed Iran for 40 days, and kept a blockade on Iran for roughly 60 days, realises the massive economic costs of the war. The war was also unpopular at home and cost the U.S. billions of dollars, depleting its stockpile of weapons.

Iran, on the other hand, has emerged regionally stronger. It will restart negotiations with the U.S. without the fear of a U.S. strike. But at the same time, Iran wants long-term economic relief and security guarantees to rebuild the country and address internal resentment. While there are incentives for both sides to reach a final settlement, there are three key sticking points. The first is Lebanon. As long as Israeli troops continue occupation of Southern Lebanon, the country will remain a tinderbox. And given that Israel is critical of the U.S.-Iran deal, Mr. Netanyahu could escalate the war aimed at torpedoing the detente. The war in Lebanon posed the first test to the deal on Saturday when Iran announced that it had closed the Strait of Hormuz, citing Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

The second is Iran's highly enriched uranium (HEU). The U.S., until recently, argued that Iran's HEU should be taken out of the country and destroyed, whereas Iran has always opposed such a move. Mr. Trump said last week that the HEU would be diluted "either in America or in Iran", which was a concession. A final agreement should draw up the modalities for downblending under the IAEA's supervision, which also means that Iran should restore IAEA access to its nuclear sites.

The third issue is Iran's 'enrichment right'. The U.S., until the war began, opposed any enrichment on Iranian soil, which had been the Israeli position as well. Iran says it will continue to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. The final agreement should narrow the gap between these two positions as well.

GS 3: ECONOMY THE HINDU PAGE: 8

Why have India's statistical databases been upgraded?

What key economic indicators have been revised? Why was an overhaul of the databases necessary? What changes were made to the national accounts and GDP estimates? How has the measurement of industrial output been improved? What changes have been made to India's inflation indicators?

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:

Last November, the Indian government received a 'C' grade, the second-lowest grade, by the International Monetary Fund for the quality of its national accounts statistics. Over the last few months, it has made several upgrades to its statistical databases, improving their timeliness, representativeness, accuracy, and coverage. These improvements have been wide-ranging, covering the way India measures its gross domestic product (GDP), the value addition in the economy, industrial output, and price levels at the retail, wholesale, and producer levels.

What are the metrics that have been updated?

The most significant of these changes was made to India's national accounts statistics in February this year by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). National accounts include several key metrics such as GDP, gross value added (GVA), sector-wise output and growth figures, and the contributions of each of the engines of growth to the economy – government expenditure, private investment, household consumption, and trade. These are released on a quarterly and annual basis.

In June, MoSPI also updated the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which captures how industrial activity in the economy is doing on a monthly basis. This includes key sectors such as manufacturing, mining, electricity, infrastructure, capital goods, and consumer goods. Apart from providing a regular snapshot of how the industrial sectors are doing, these monthly figures also feed into the GDP and GVA metrics.

The third broad set of upgrades were to how India measures inflation. Price changes at the retail level, which is meant to capture the consumer-end of the market, are measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Similarly, price changes at the wholesale level, which is ideally meant to capture the prices that producers get, are measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). MoSPI releases the CPI while the Ministry of Commerce and Industry releases the WPI. Both these indices have been significantly

updated and upgraded – the CPI in February and the WPI in June.

In June, the Commerce Ministry also introduced a new index – the Producer Price Index (PPI) – which not only captures the price impact on producers more accurately, but will also replace the WPI entirely in five years.

Why was an update needed?

These databases were outdated and were becoming less representative of reality with each passing year. The GDP and GVA data, for example, had a base year of 2011-12, as did the IIP. The economy has changed substantially in the years since then, with the contribution of several sectors to the economy growing while others have diminished in importance. An outdated base year weakens the overall measurements and makes them less representative of the current reality.

Before they were updated, the WPI and CPI had base years of 2011-12 and 2012, respectively. Here, too, the outdated indices were measuring price changes and index values based on household consumption patterns that were about 15 years old. Several items used back then, such as DVDs and cassettes, were included in the indices even though

they are not used now. Conversely, several items that are being used now were not captured by the indices because they were not in use back then.

The databases were outdated and were becoming less representative of reality with each passing year. An outdated base year weakens the overall measurements and makes them less representative of the current reality

they are not used now. Conversely, several items that are being used now were not captured by the indices because they were not in use back then.

More accurate price information is important not just for policymaking but also for a more accurate measure of the size of the economy and its growth. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, for example, uses the CPI to gauge inflation and decide on interest rates. The Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief given to current and former government employees, respectively, are pegged to inflation. The rate of growth of the real economy, which is the commonly accepted metric used to measure growth worldwide, is arrived at after having adjusted the impact of inflation on the economy.

What changes were made to the national accounts?

First, the base year was updated to 2022-23, immediately making the data more representative of the current situation. Apart from this, the new series of national accounts has also incorporated several methodological changes and measurement improvements.

One of the most important changes, and one that has long been advocated by statisticians, was the incorporation of the 'double deflator' method for estimating real GDP growth. This adjusts input and output prices separately, providing a much more accurate picture of the impact of price changes. Currently, the 'double deflator' method is being used for agriculture and manufacturing. It is expected to be adopted for the other sectors as well over time.

The other important change was the segregation of activities in multi-activity enterprises. There are several companies that are active across different sectors. Earlier, the data would capture the company's entire output and allocate it to the main sector within which it was operating. This yielded a somewhat inaccurate measure of sectoral activity. Now, the output will be allocated to each sector proportionately, providing a more accurate picture.

The new series also incorporates new data sources such as the Goods and Services Tax data and the Periodic Labour Force Surveys. It also incorporates several improvements in statistical methodology that will reduce discrepancies.

What other changes were made to output measures?

MoSPI updated the base year of the IIP to 2022-23 and expanded its coverage by including sectors such as gas supply, water supply, sewerage, and waste

management activities, while retaining the previous sectors. Simultaneously, the index was revamped to provide greater granularity in terms of sources of electricity (renewable and non-renewable), and the types of minerals produced.

The revised item basket consists of 1,042 products mapped to 463 item groups, compared to 839 items mapped to 407 item groups in the previous series.

What are the inflation-related changes?

The base year of the CPI was updated to 2024, and the basket of items it measures as well as their relative weightages were pegged to the latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey of 2023-24. The price change metrics now better reflect the current consumption patterns of households.

The data is also more illustrative, with the tables providing 12 different categories of items compared to the six groups in the previous series. Overall, the total number of items measured – including both goods and services – has increased from 299 to 358.

These additions of goods and services include for the first time inclusion of rural house rent, modern consumption items such as online media services and fuels such as CNG and PNG, and improvements in the measurement of telephone charges, rail fare, air fare, fuel, postal charges and online media and streaming services. Items that are no longer used, such as VCRs, DVD players, radio, tape recorders, and cassettes, were removed from the CPI.

The WPI was similarly updated, with its base year revised to 2022-23 and the number of items expanded from 697 to 957. The new series also incorporates several methodological refinements.

The data have also been reorganised more logically. For instance, crude petroleum and natural gas have been moved from the 'Primary Articles' category to the 'Fuel and Power' major group, which already includes other key fuels such as coal, electricity and petroleum products.

The third major change introduced by the Commerce Ministry was the adoption of a PPI. Unlike the WPI, the PPI separately tracks the prices producers pay for inputs and the prices they receive for their outputs. The PPI excludes additional costs such as transport and indirect taxes, which the WPI includes. This makes the PPI a more accurate representation of prices at the producer level. It also incorporates both goods and services, which makes it more holistic. The government has indicated that the WPI will be phased out over the next five years, leaving the CPI and PPI as the country's two principal price indices.



Items like DVD players and tape recorders have been removed from CPI. GETTY IMAGES

GS 1: GEOGRAPHY THE HINDU PAGE: 10

What a 'super' El Niño might mean for India's monsoon

Setting the El Niño years since 1950 against IMD's long-period rainfall series shows that, of roughly two dozen such years, about 15 produced a below-normal monsoon and around 10 tipped into outright deficiency

Jacob Koshy

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) confirmed this month that an El Niño has formed in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, and placed the odds at about 63% that it will strengthen into a "very strong" – colloquially, a "super" – event by the northern winter. India's June rainfall, until the 16th, is roughly 35% below normal. The combination has revived a question that returns with every El Niño year: how reliably do the strongest of these events translate into a failed Indian monsoon?

An El Niño is the periodic warming of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific that tends to weaken the South Asian monsoon and whose potency is measured by how far sea-surface temperatures in a reference patch of the Pacific climb above their long-term average.

D.S. Pai, Chief Forecaster at the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Regional Meteorological Centre in Chennai, set out the gradations: a departure of 0.5-1° C is 'weak,' 1-1.5° is 'moderate,' 1.5-2° is 'strong,' and anything beyond 2° is 'very strong.' He added that some forecasts suggest the current event could approach a record of around 2.5°.

The trade winds that normally drive warm surface water westward towards Asia weaken; the

Heat and rain

Several of India's worst droughts have been in El Niño years

- The NOAA has confirmed an El Niño has formed, with high odds of becoming a very strong event
- India's current rainfall deficit in June is mostly local and cannot reliably predict the entire season's final outcome
- Roughly 60% of El Niño years produce deficient rainfall, often leading to significant agricultural deficits
- The Indian Ocean Dipole sometimes counters El Niño, but this year it may be too weak to do so
- Delayed monsoon onset and dry spells are often more concerning than the total volume of rainfall
- Contemporary climate change makes modern El Niño events more intense than those recorded in the past



El Niño follows a consistent calendar, which bears directly on its monsoon impact. THE HINDU

eastern Pacific warms, which in turn slackens the winds further generating a feedback loop that amplifies the anomaly. Scientists note that a warmer baseline ocean, the result of long-term climate change, has raised the heat available to recent events, making them more intense than earlier ones.

In the long term however, such events remain rare. Only a handful, the instrumental record shows, have crossed the 2° threshold – 1972-73, 1982-83, 1997-98 and 2015-16.

El Niño also follows a consistent calendar, which bears directly on its monsoon impact. "It starts in one spring season, peaks in the winter, and very fast it weakens in the next spring," Pai said, noting that an event very occa-

sionally persists into a second year. Because the warming establishes only in spring and matures later, he said, its suppressing effect on the monsoon is felt mainly in the middle and later part of the June-September season rather than at its start. June rainfall and the pace of onset, he added, are governed largely by local and regional factors – so a weak June, including the present 35% shortfall, is not by itself a reliable guide to the season.

The 1982-83 El Niño was associated with severe drought and bushfires in Australia and dry conditions across Indonesia. The 1997-98 event drove severe forest fires and choking haze across Indonesia and Southeast Asia, killed an estimated one-sixth of the

world's coral, and helped push global temperatures to a record. The 2015-16 episode triggered mass bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef, made 2016 the warmest year then recorded, and catalysed severe drought and food shortages across southern and eastern Africa.

Paradoxically, the 1997-98 El Niño actually brought 2% more rains than usual for India's summer monsoon months. This was due to an effect in the Indian Ocean, called the Indian Ocean Dipole, that brought in warm water pools, countering the Pacific-induced drying. Since then, forecasters have consistently watched for the Dipole's waxing and waning.

One of the reasons, IMD Director General, M. Mohapatra has said, for a

monsoon deficit this year is that the Dipole won't be strong enough to counter the Niño.

Setting the El Niño years since 1950 against IMD's long-period rainfall series shows that, of roughly two dozen such years, about 15 produced a below-normal monsoon and around 10 tipped into outright deficiency, i.e. seasonal rainfall below 90% of the long-period average. This correlation is strong enough to shape food and fiscal planning.

Several of India's worst droughts were in El Niño years, among them 1972, 1982, 2009, and 2015.

El Niño also redistributes the world's tropical cyclones rather than simply adding to them. NOAA's research arm notes that the warming generally suppresses Atlantic hurricane activity by strengthening vertical wind shear – the change in wind speed and direction with height that can tear a developing storm apart – while making conditions more favourable for hurricanes in the central and eastern Pacific. The effect tends to scale with the event's strength.

For the basins closer to Asia, the signal runs the other way: forecasters note that during an El Niño, the odds of a Pacific storm intensifying into a super typhoon rise appreciably, though such systems typically recurve towards East Asia and the Americas rather than the Indian subcontinent.

GS 1: ART AND CULTURE INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 9

From Kalamkari painting to Kashmiri carpet, Modi's gifts to foreign dignitaries showcase India's heritage

Express News Service
New Delhi, June 20

FROM KALAMKARI Mahabharata painting to Pochampally silk stole to Lakadong Turmeric to thekua — a range of Indian art, handicraft and products figured in the list of items gifted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to foreign dignitaries during his recent visit to France and Slovakia.

The PM gifted a Kalamkari Mahabharata painting to French President Emmanuel Macron. "This hand-crafted Kalamkari painting from Andhra Pradesh showcases India's rich artistic heritage and took nearly six months to complete," said a source, adding that the painting was created using traditional pen-drawing techniques, and it depicts scenes from the Mahabharata. To Macron's spouse, Modi gifted a Pochampally silk stole. "The Pochampally silk stole is



PM Narendra Modi gifted a Kalamkari Mahabharata painting to French President Emmanuel Macron; (right) the Kashmiri silk carpet he gifted to Slovakia PM Robert Fico. ANI

a handwoven textile from Telangana, made using the traditional Ikat resist-dyeing technique. Known for its intricate geometric and floral patterns, fine craftsmanship, and elegant design, it showcases India's rich textile heritage," said a source.

The PM gifted Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico a Kash-



miri silk carpet, which is a prestigious hand-knotted craft from Kashmir. The handwoven carpet is made from high-quality natural silk and is known for its intricate floral, paisley, vine, and medallion designs inspired by local artistic traditions and natural beauty.

During his meeting with Slo-

vak President Peter Pellegrini in Bratislava, Modi gifted him a Brass Dokra Antelope set, which is a handcrafted artwork that showcases India's ancient Dokra metal-casting tradition, practiced for centuries by tribal artisans in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal, as per sources.

"The antelope figures symbolise gentleness, agility, and harmony with nature, drawing a cultural connection to the Tatra Chamois of Slovakia, with both animals representing resilience and a deep bond with their natural environments," said a source.

The Prime Minister also gifted the handcrafted Thewa motif cufflinks, which showcase the traditional jewellery craft of Rajasthan's Pratapgarh, featuring finely engraved gold sheets fused onto coloured glass, creating intricate and elegant designs inspired by nature and symbolism, as per an official.

The PM gifted a copy of Charak Samhita, Susruta Samhita and Thekua to Slovakia Speaker Richard Raš. While Charaka Samhita reflects India's rich scientific and intellectual heritage, Thekua, a traditional snack from Bihar, reflects cultural tradition, festive celebration, and regional culinary.

In Ayurveda, Ashwagandha is valued as a Rasayana herb that supports vitality, mental clarity, immunity, and overall well-being. It is widely studied today for its adaptogenic and health-supporting properties. Nagauri Ashwagandha also supports rural livelihoods and represents the integration of traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with modern scientific research.

During the G7 Summit, the PM gifted Rajasthan's Nagauri Ashwagandha, Meghalaya's Lakadong Turmeric, Ramban Honey produced in the Chenab Valley and Banarsi silk stoles.

GS 2: HEALTH
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 10

Yoga for healthy ageing: Adding life to years



BY C P RADHAKRISHNAN

FOR AGES, Bharat's unique distinction has been its noble vision of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' — of seeing the entire world as a single entity and all living beings as one. Rooted in the spiritual wisdom of Bharat, yoga is an ancient discipline that harmonises body, mind, and spirit.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the United Nations General Assembly on September 27, 2014, said yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action, restraint and fulfilment, harmony between man and nature, and is a holistic approach to health and well-being. At the behest of the Prime Minister, the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 2014, approved the proposal, co-sponsored by a record 174 countries, to declare June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. Since 2015, millions of people around the world have been gathering in public spaces to practice yoga together — transforming our ancient wisdom into a global movement.

On June 21 this year, as the Prime Minister leads Yoga Day in Kolkata, I am visiting Ladakh for the celebrations. For many years, I have experienced the benefits of practising yoga and *panchakarma*, which are often hailed as 'sister sciences'. It is these deeply enriching personal experiences that have inspired me to pen down my reflections on yoga and its profound impact on human well-being.

A timeless legacy of Bharat

'Yoga, a timeless practice for physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, is believed to have started with the very dawn of our civilisation. In the yogic lore, Lord Shiva is seen as the first yogi or Adi Yogi, and the first Guru or Adi Guru, while Maharishi Patanjali is hailed as the father of classical yoga for systematising its principles in the Yoga Sutras. Maharishi Patanjali shares a deep spiritual association with Tamil Nadu. His physical Jeeva Samadhi is also believed to be located in Thirupattur.



Today is International Day of Yoga. FILE

Our revered *rishis* and *munis* gifted the world the invaluable treasure of yoga. Through years of meditation, austerity, and spiritual inquiry, they developed a holistic system that unites the body, mind, and soul.

This year's theme for International Yoga Day, 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing', holds special significance. Remarkable advances in healthcare, public health systems, and declining mortality rates have increased life expectancy across nations. The India Ageing Report 2023, released by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), states that by 2050, nearly one in five Indians will be above the age of 60.

While we celebrate this invaluable gift of longevity, it simultaneously places upon society a solemn responsibility of ensuring that added years to life also mean added life to years. I believe that now the pressing need of the hour is to initiate people into yoga at an early age. The earlier one begins the practice of yoga, the greater the cumulative benefits throughout life. I am pleased to note that the National Education Policy 2020 accords yoga a significant place as an integral component of health, wellness, and value-based education. This is a positive step in the direction of initiating the young into yoga.

Solution for modern-day ageing

Academic and clinical interest in the therapeutic dimensions of yoga has grown exponentially in recent years.

Premier institutions such as the National

Institutes of Health (NIH), Harvard Medical School, and several peer-reviewed journals, such as *Lancet*, through their studies, have demonstrated that regular yoga practice safely improves balance, flexibility, and mobility among senior citizens, thereby significantly reducing the fear and risk of falls. Research has also shown measurable benefits of yoga in improving bone density, alleviating arthritic pain, enhancing respiratory efficiency, stabilising blood pressure, and supporting mental well-being. Equally important, meditative and breathing practices have been found to improve sleep quality, emotional resilience, and cognitive functioning among the elderly.

But I would like to emphasise that the true strength of yoga lies in its holistic nature. Beyond physical rehabilitation, yoga nurtures emotional balance and social connectedness. I have witnessed that one of the deepest challenges of ageing today is the growing sense of isolation experienced by many seniors. Yoga gently transforms this inward loneliness into a broader sense of collective belonging.

Importantly, as per my own experiences, 'Yoga For Healthy Ageing' does not demand strenuous physical exertion. Classical yogic practices have been thoughtfully adapted into gentle and accessible protocols suitable for senior citizens.

At the same time, yoga also serves as a source of resilience for caregivers and family members who shoulder the emotional and physical demands of elderly care.

More than 2,000 years ago, scholar and Tamil saint Thiruvalluvar advocated a personalised approach to health through the *Kural* (949), "Consider the patient's condition, the nature of the disease, and the proper time before undertaking treatment." This timeless wisdom mirrors the modern principles of Yoga for Healthy Ageing, where practices are carefully adapted to an individual's age, health, and needs, enabling people to enjoy a healthier, more active, and more dignified life in their later years.

As we observe the International Day of Yoga 2026, I urge every citizen, educational institution, civil society organisation, healthcare professional, and community leader to embrace yoga not merely as an occasional exercise, but as a lifelong cultural and wellness practice.

The writer is Vice-President of India