



NAMAN SHARMA
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Daily **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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 **Offline Centre Location:**
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1. U.S. sinks Iranian vessel near Sri Lanka

Why in the News?

- A U.S. submarine torpedoed the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean, about 40 nautical miles off the coast of Sri Lanka near Galle, causing the ship to sink.
- The strike reportedly killed at least 83 sailors, while 32 were rescued by the Sri Lankan Navy after receiving a distress call.
- U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed the attack and stated that the vessel was sunk using a torpedo fired by an American submarine, marking the first such sinking of an enemy ship by torpedo since the Second World War.
- The Iranian warship had earlier participated in the International Fleet Review 2026 hosted by Visakhapatnam.
- The incident has brought the West Asian conflict into the strategic waters of the Indian Ocean, raising concerns for regional security and maritime stability.



Background

Escalating West Asian Conflict

- The sinking occurred amid an ongoing escalation between the United States and Iran in West Asia, involving maritime security operations and proxy conflicts.
- Historically, tensions intensified after the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal, leading to repeated military confrontations in the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters.

Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean

- The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is a crucial global trade corridor through which nearly 80% of global maritime oil trade passes.
- Any militarisation or conflict in this region threatens international shipping routes and energy security.

Iranian Naval Expansion

- Iran has increasingly deployed naval assets beyond the Persian Gulf to demonstrate blue-water capability.
- The frigate IRIS Dena, commissioned in 2021, was part of Iran's strategy to expand naval diplomacy and presence in the Indo-Pacific.

International Naval Diplomacy

- The International Fleet Review 2026, hosted by India, showcased naval cooperation among several countries and promoted maritime security dialogue.
- The participation of Iranian ships highlighted India's neutral and inclusive maritime diplomacy.

Features

Rare Use of Torpedo Warfare

- According to the U.S., a submarine-launched torpedo was used to sink the vessel.
- This marks the first confirmed torpedo sinking of a warship since World War II, highlighting the continued relevance of submarine warfare.

Proximity to Sri Lanka

- The attack occurred close to Sri Lanka's territorial waters, bringing a global conflict dangerously close to the Indian subcontinent.

Humanitarian Response by Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka responded to the distress call under the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue.
- The Sri Lanka Navy dispatched vessels and rescued survivors, demonstrating adherence to international maritime obligations.

Strategic Signalling by the U.S.

- The U.S. statement describing the attack as a "quiet death" signals deterrence messaging against Iranian naval deployments beyond West Asia.

Maritime Security Risks

- The incident underscores the expansion of geopolitical competition into the Indian Ocean, a region traditionally dominated by trade rather than direct military conflict.

Challenge

Escalation of Conflict in the Indian Ocean

- The attack risks spreading the West Asian conflict into the Indo-Pacific region, potentially destabilising maritime security.

Threat to Global Shipping Routes

- The Indian Ocean hosts major sea lines of communication (SLOCs) connecting Asia, Africa and Europe.
- Military confrontations in these waters may disrupt global trade.

Diplomatic Pressure on Regional States

- Countries such as Sri Lanka and India may face diplomatic pressure from competing powers to take sides.

Risk of Naval Militarisation

- Increased deployment of submarines, warships and surveillance assets could turn the Indian Ocean into a theatre of major power rivalry.

Humanitarian and Legal Questions

- The attack raises questions regarding rules of engagement, international maritime law and the protection of sailors in conflict zones.

Way Forward

Strengthening Maritime Diplomacy

- Regional powers like India, Sri Lanka and ASEAN countries should promote diplomatic dialogue to prevent conflict spillover.

Enhancing Indian Ocean Security Frameworks

- Platforms such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium should be utilised to ensure collective maritime stability.

Ensuring Neutral Humanitarian Responses

- Coastal states must continue to adhere to international obligations such as maritime rescue and humanitarian assistance.

Promoting Confidence-Building Measures

- Naval communication channels and hotlines between major powers can reduce the risk of accidental escalation.

Strengthening International Maritime Law

- Greater emphasis is needed on enforcing rules under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to regulate military activities in international waters.

Conclusion

The sinking of the Iranian frigate near Sri Lanka marks a significant escalation of geopolitical tensions from West Asia into the Indian Ocean region. Beyond the tragic human loss, the incident highlights the growing militarisation of global maritime spaces and the risks posed to international shipping and regional stability. For India and other Indian Ocean littoral states, the event underscores the importance of maritime diplomacy, multilateral cooperation and adherence to international law to prevent the region from becoming a new theatre of great-power conflict.

2. Morbi's ceramic industry stares at a shutdown as West Asia conflict escalates

Why in the News?

- The ceramic industry in Morbi, Gujarat, one of the largest ceramic manufacturing hubs in the world, is facing a potential shutdown due to disruption in gas supplies from the Gulf region.
- The disruption has occurred because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating conflict involving Israel, the United States, and Iran.
- The Morbi ceramic cluster depends heavily on propane and natural gas, used for firing kilns and drying tiles.
- Industry associations have warned that gas stocks may last only a few days, after which around 600 ceramic units employing nearly 3–4 lakh workers may be forced to halt operations.



Background

Morbi: India's Ceramic Capital

- Morbi is considered the ceramic hub of India, producing a major share of the country's tiles, sanitary ware, and vitrified products.
- The cluster accounts for over 70% of India's ceramic tile production and exports to more than 150 countries.

Dependence on Gulf Energy Supplies

- Ceramic manufacturing requires continuous high-temperature kiln operations, which rely primarily on natural gas, LPG, and propane.
- Much of this fuel is imported from Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE.

Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz

- The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most critical global energy shipping routes, carrying nearly 20–30% of the world's oil and LNG supplies.
- Closure or disruption of this chokepoint immediately affects global fuel supply chains and prices.

Geopolitical Escalation in West Asia

- The crisis is linked to the intensifying confrontation between Iran, Israel, and the United States, which has disrupted maritime movement in the Persian Gulf region.

Features

Fuel Supply Disruptions

- Shipments of propane, LPG and natural gas from Gulf suppliers are stalled due to tensions and shipping risks.
- Many consignments are reportedly stuck near the Strait of Hormuz.

Limited Fuel Stock

- Ceramic manufacturers report propane stocks lasting only 2–4 days.
- CNG supply from Gujarat Gas Limited may last only about 7–10 days.

Industrial Concentration

- Morbi hosts around 600 ceramic manufacturing units, producing tiles, sanitary ware, and vitrified products.

Employment Impact

- Nearly 2–4 lakh workers are directly or indirectly dependent on the ceramic industry in the region.

Supply Chain Vulnerability

- The industry is highly energy-intensive and dependent on imported fuel, making it vulnerable to global geopolitical disruptions.

Challenges

Energy Dependence

- Heavy reliance on imported propane and natural gas makes the industry vulnerable to external geopolitical shocks.

Risk of Industrial Shutdown

- If gas supplies remain disrupted, complete shutdown of production units may occur within days.

Employment and Livelihood Crisis

- Shutdown could lead to large-scale unemployment among migrant labourers, many of whom depend on daily wages.

Rising Fuel Prices

- Even if supplies resume, fuel prices may surge, increasing production costs and affecting competitiveness.

Export and Supply Chain Disruptions

- Morbi exports ceramics globally; production stoppage could affect India's export commitments and global market share.

Industrial Concentration Risk

- Overdependence on a single industrial cluster increases vulnerability to shocks.

Way Forward

Diversification of Energy Sources

- Encourage the use of renewable energy, electric kilns, and alternative fuels to reduce dependence on imported gas.

Strategic Fuel Reserves

- Industries could maintain strategic fuel reserves to buffer short-term supply disruptions.

Domestic Energy Infrastructure

- Strengthen domestic natural gas production and pipeline infrastructure to reduce reliance on imports.

Government Support Measures

- The government may provide temporary subsidies, emergency fuel allocation, or credit support to prevent industrial collapse.

Supply Chain Diversification

- Explore alternative suppliers and logistics routes outside the Persian Gulf region.

Cluster Resilience Planning

- Develop industrial resilience frameworks for key clusters like Morbi to withstand global disruptions.

Conclusion

The crisis facing Morbi's ceramic industry illustrates how geopolitical conflicts in distant regions can directly affect local economies and employment in India. Dependence on imported energy and vulnerable maritime routes exposes industries to sudden shocks. Strengthening energy diversification, strategic reserves, and resilient supply chains will be essential to protect critical industrial clusters and sustain India's manufacturing and export competitiveness.

3. U.K. Museum Returns 16th-Century Bronze Statue to India

Why in the News?

- The Ashmolean Museum has returned a 16th-century bronze statue of Thirumangai Alvar to the Government of India.
- The statue was handed over to the High Commission of India, London, after provenance research confirmed that it originally belonged to the Sundararaja Perumal Temple.
- The idol had been acquired by the museum in 1967 and later identified as a stolen temple artefact.
- Its return is part of the growing global trend of repatriation of looted cultural artefacts to their countries of origin.

Background

Cultural Heritage and Temple Idols

- Temple idols in India are not merely artworks but living religious icons used in worship and rituals.
- Theft of such idols increased during the 20th century due to international demand for antique Indian art.

Idol Smuggling from India

- Several idols from temples across Tamil Nadu and other states were smuggled abroad through art dealers and illegal networks.
- Many ended up in museums and private collections in Europe and the United States.

Provenance Research

- Provenance refers to the documented history of ownership of an artefact.
- The Ashmolean Museum conducted detailed research after scholars linked the statue to a 1957 archival photograph preserved by the Institut Français de Pondichéry and École française d'Extrême-Orient.

Formal Claim by India

- After the idol was identified as missing from the temple, Indian authorities filed a complaint in 2020, leading to a formal request for repatriation.

Features

Identification of the Idol

- Scholars matched the museum artefact with archival temple photographs from 1957, proving it originated from the Sundararaja Perumal Temple.

Replacement with Replica

- Investigations revealed that a replica had replaced the original idol in the temple, a common method used in idol theft cases.

Museum's Ethical Commitment

- The Ashmolean Museum acknowledged the evidence and decided to return the artefact as part of its ethical collection and restitution policy.



Cultural and Religious Significance

- The idol represents Thirumangai Alvar, one of the 12 Alvar saints of the Vaishnavite Bhakti tradition.

Diplomatic Cooperation

- The repatriation involved cooperation between museum authorities, scholars, and the Government of India.

Challenges

Large Number of Stolen Artefacts

- Thousands of Indian artefacts remain scattered in foreign museums and private collections.

Difficulty in Provenance Verification

- Many objects were acquired decades ago with incomplete or falsified ownership records.

Complex Legal Processes

- Repatriation often involves long diplomatic negotiations and legal procedures.

Smuggling Networks

- International antiquities trafficking networks continue to operate illegally.

Protection of Temple Heritage

- Many temples lack adequate security systems and documentation of their artefacts.

Way Forward

Strengthening Legal Framework

- Strict enforcement of laws such as the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972.

Digital Documentation of Heritage

- Creating comprehensive digital databases of temple idols and antiquities to help identify stolen artefacts.

International Cooperation

- Collaborate with global bodies like UNESCO to facilitate cultural restitution.

Monitoring Art Markets

- Regulate international auction houses and private collectors dealing in antiquities.

Improved Temple Security

- Install CCTV surveillance, inventories, and heritage protection units for temples and archaeological sites.

Conclusion

The return of the Thirumangai Alvar bronze idol marks an important step in restoring India's stolen cultural heritage and correcting historical injustices in the global art trade. Beyond the recovery of a valuable artefact, the repatriation symbolises the reconnection of faith, culture, and history with its rightful community. Continued international cooperation, stronger legal frameworks, and improved documentation will be crucial to reclaim and safeguard India's cultural treasures.

4. India ranks second globally in childhood obesity: study

Why in the News?

- The World Obesity Atlas 2026 has revealed that India ranks second globally in the number of children living with overweight and obesity.
- According to the report, nearly 41 million Indian children aged 5–19 have high Body Mass Index (BMI), including about 14 million who are obese.
- The findings were released on World Obesity Day.
- The report warns that the global target of halving childhood obesity by 2025 will be missed, with the deadline now extended to 2030.

Background

Rising Global Obesity Crisis

- Obesity has become a major global public health challenge, affecting both developed and developing countries.
- According to global estimates, over one in five children worldwide are overweight or obese, up from 14.6% in 2010 to 20.7% today.

India's Nutrition Transition

- India is experiencing a nutrition transition, where traditional diets are increasingly replaced by processed foods high in sugar, salt, and fat.
- Urbanisation, sedentary lifestyles, and increased consumption of junk food and sugary drinks have accelerated obesity rates.

Double Burden of Malnutrition

- India faces a dual challenge of undernutrition and obesity.
- While many children still suffer from stunting and wasting, a growing number are overweight due to unhealthy diets and low physical activity.

Global Health Targets

- International health bodies aimed to halt the rise of childhood obesity by 2025, but progress has been slow.
- The new target is now aligned with the World Health Organisation Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

Features

India's Global Ranking

- India ranks second after China in the number of children with high BMI.
- China has 62 million children with high BMI, followed by India (41 million) and the United States (27 million).

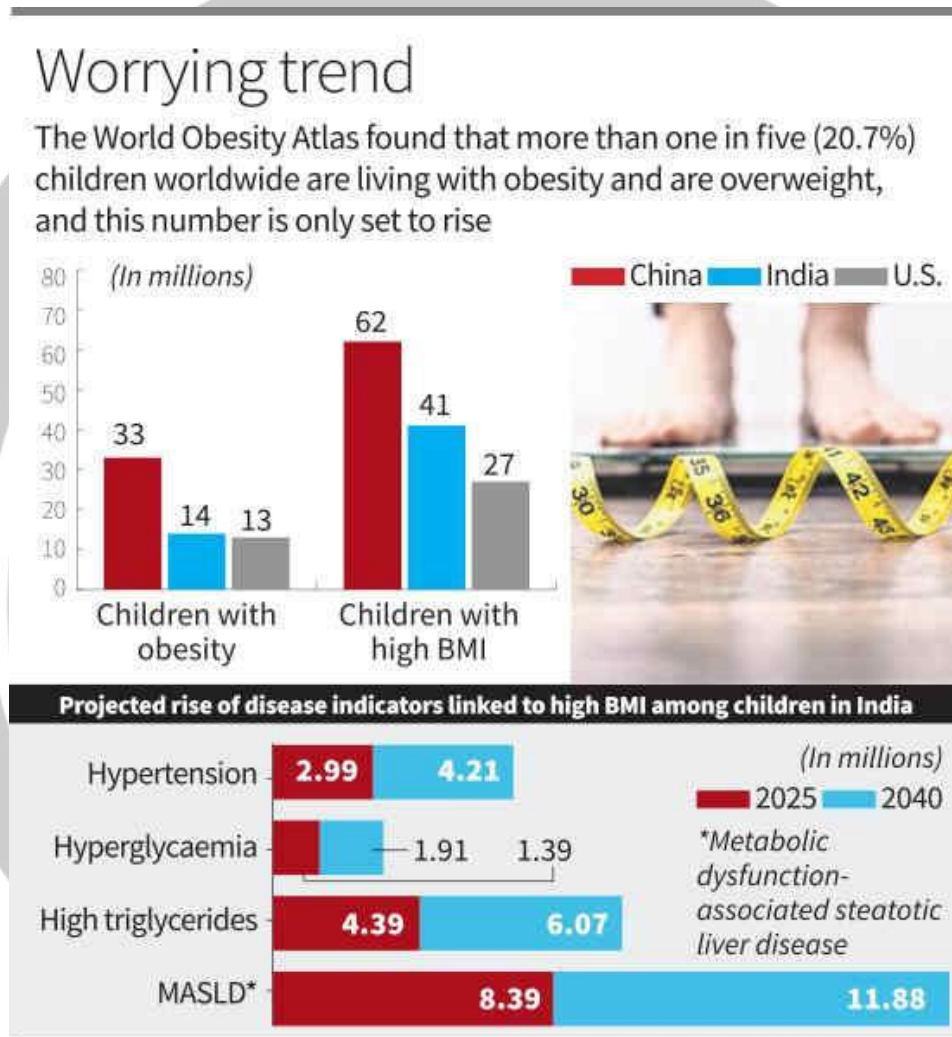
Major Risk Factors in India

The report highlights several lifestyle and health factors contributing to childhood obesity:

- Low physical activity: About 74% of adolescents aged 11–17 fail to meet recommended activity levels.
- Poor breastfeeding practices: Nearly 32.6% of infants experience sub-optimal breastfeeding.
- Sugary beverage consumption: Children aged 6–10 consume sugar-sweetened drinks regularly.
- Limited access to school meals: Only 35.5% of school-age children receive school meals.

Intergenerational Health Factors

- Among women aged 15–49, about 13.4% have high BMI and 4.2% live with Type 2 diabetes, increasing obesity risks in children.



Future Projections

- By 2040, the number of children globally living with obesity or overweight could reach 507 million if current trends continue.

Challenges

Sedentary Lifestyle

- Increased screen time, digital entertainment, and limited physical activity contribute to obesity among children.

Unhealthy Dietary Patterns

- High consumption of processed foods, fast foods, and sugary beverages is replacing traditional, nutritious diets.

Lack of Awareness

- Many families lack awareness about balanced diets, nutrition, and the health risks of obesity.

Urbanisation and Lifestyle Changes

- Rapid urbanisation has led to reduced outdoor play and increased reliance on convenience foods.

Weak Policy Implementation

- Existing nutrition and health programmes often lack effective monitoring and enforcement.

Long-Term Health Risks

Childhood obesity increases the risk of:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Hypertension
- Mental health issues

Way Forward

Promoting Physical Activity

- Schools should encourage sports, physical education, and active lifestyles among children.

Strengthening Nutrition Programmes

- Expand initiatives such as the PM POSHAN Scheme to improve nutritional intake.

Regulating Junk Food

- Introduce taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and stricter regulations on junk food marketing to children.

Nutrition Education

- Public awareness campaigns should promote healthy eating habits and balanced diets.

Strengthening Maternal and Child Health

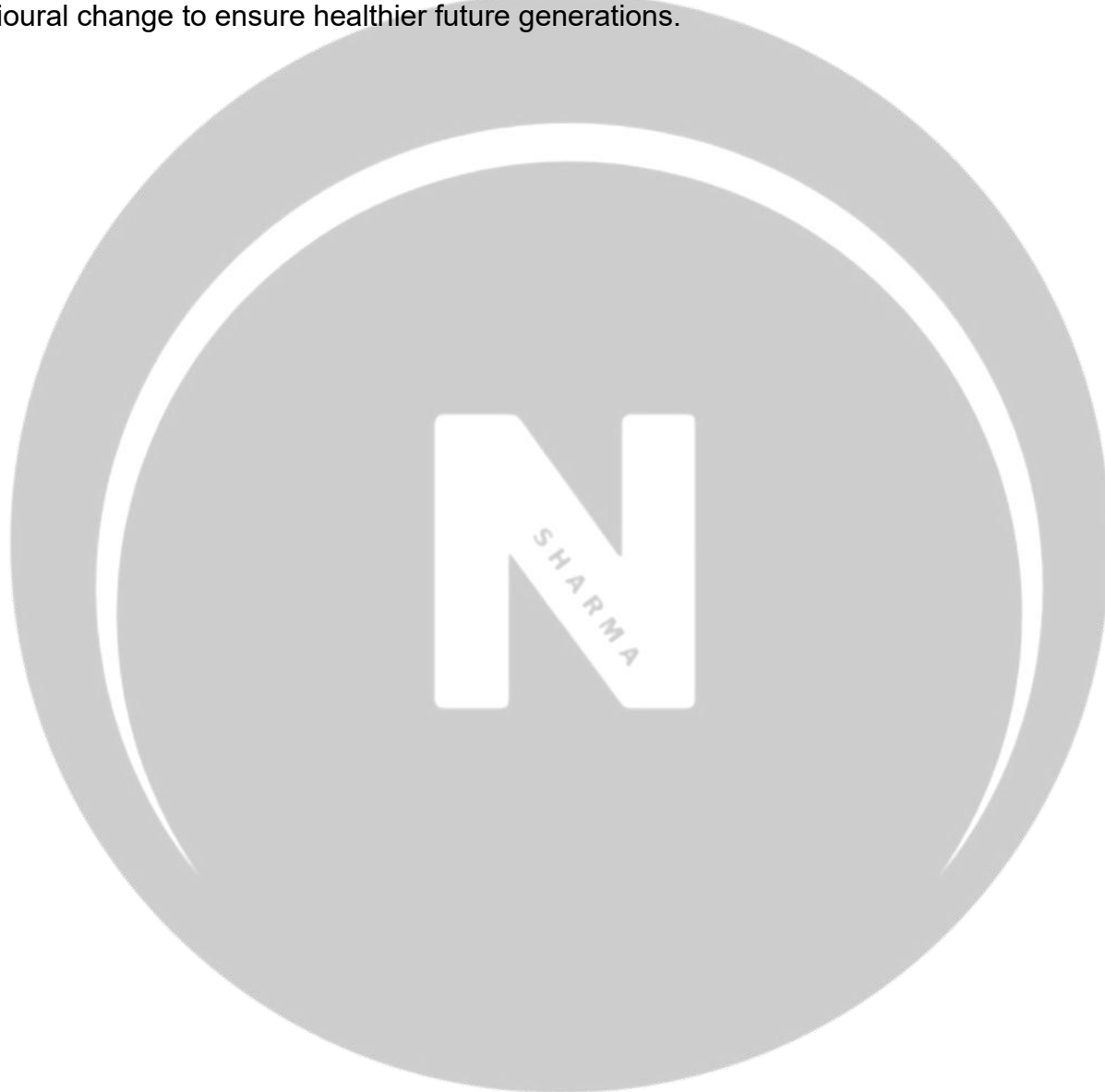
- Encourage exclusive breastfeeding and better maternal nutrition to reduce obesity risks later in life.

Multi-sectoral Policy Approach

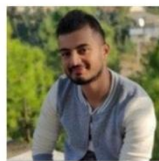
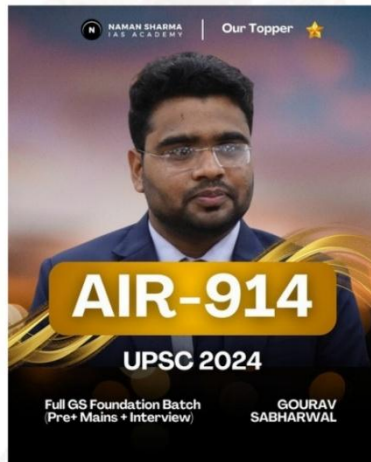
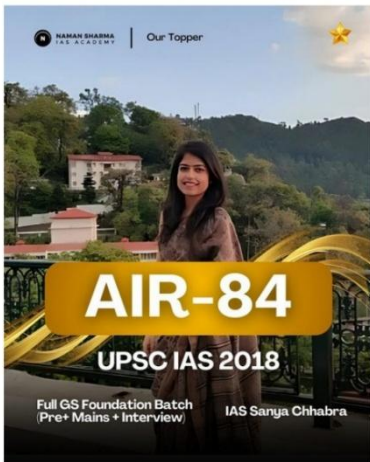
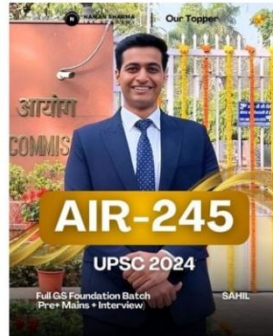
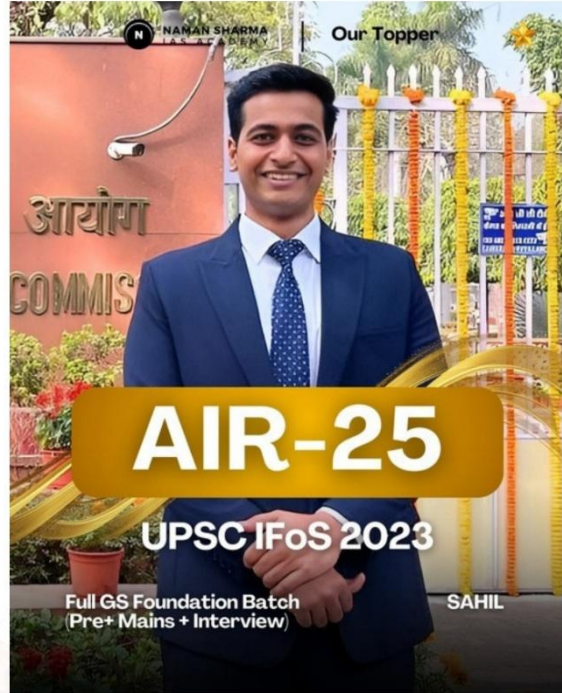
- Address obesity through coordinated action involving health, education, urban planning, and food regulation sectors.

Conclusion

The rising incidence of childhood obesity in India reflects the country's rapid lifestyle and dietary transition. With millions of children already affected and the numbers expected to grow, the issue poses a serious long-term public health challenge. Addressing this crisis requires early interventions, stronger health policies, improved nutrition programmes, and widespread behavioural change to ensure healthier future generations.



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