

## Sansad TV Perspective: Fighting Epidemics

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: Fighting Epidemics

**Video link:** <https://youtu.be/eEcH4yNdVL0>

**Anchor:** Teena Jha

### Participants:

1. Prof. Narendra Kumar Arora, Chairman, COVID-19 Working Group of NTAGI
2. Sanjay Kumar, Former Director-General, National Disaster Response Force
3. Dr. Sanjay K. Rai, National President, Indian Public Health Association

### Context:

The wave of COVID-19 surrounded the world with a major threat and enhanced the significance of epidemic preparedness. In this regard, the [UNGA](#) encouraged the adoption of preventive measures and preparedness against the devastating outcomes of pandemic-like situations. The International Day of Epidemic Preparedness is observed on the 27th of December. It is recognised as the day where the member states of the UN come together with an objective to promote awareness regarding epidemics at the local, national, regional and international levels. A profound study by experts draws an alarming inference of the continuity of pandemics and epidemics with the emergence of new strains of the pathogens (viruses, disease-causing bacteria and other harmful microorganisms). At the present hour, the world looks towards a meticulous roadmap tackling the adverse effects of epidemics.

Read more about [Epidemics](#) in the linked article.

### The Background:

- Nature has determined its unpredictable feature through the evolution and emergence of new infectious disease-causing strains of microorganisms.
- With the emerging trends of new infections, the field of vaccine research and development has made remarkable achievements in saving many lives.

- Over the years, the world witnessed outbreaks of deadly diseases caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, [Ebola](#), Zika, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).

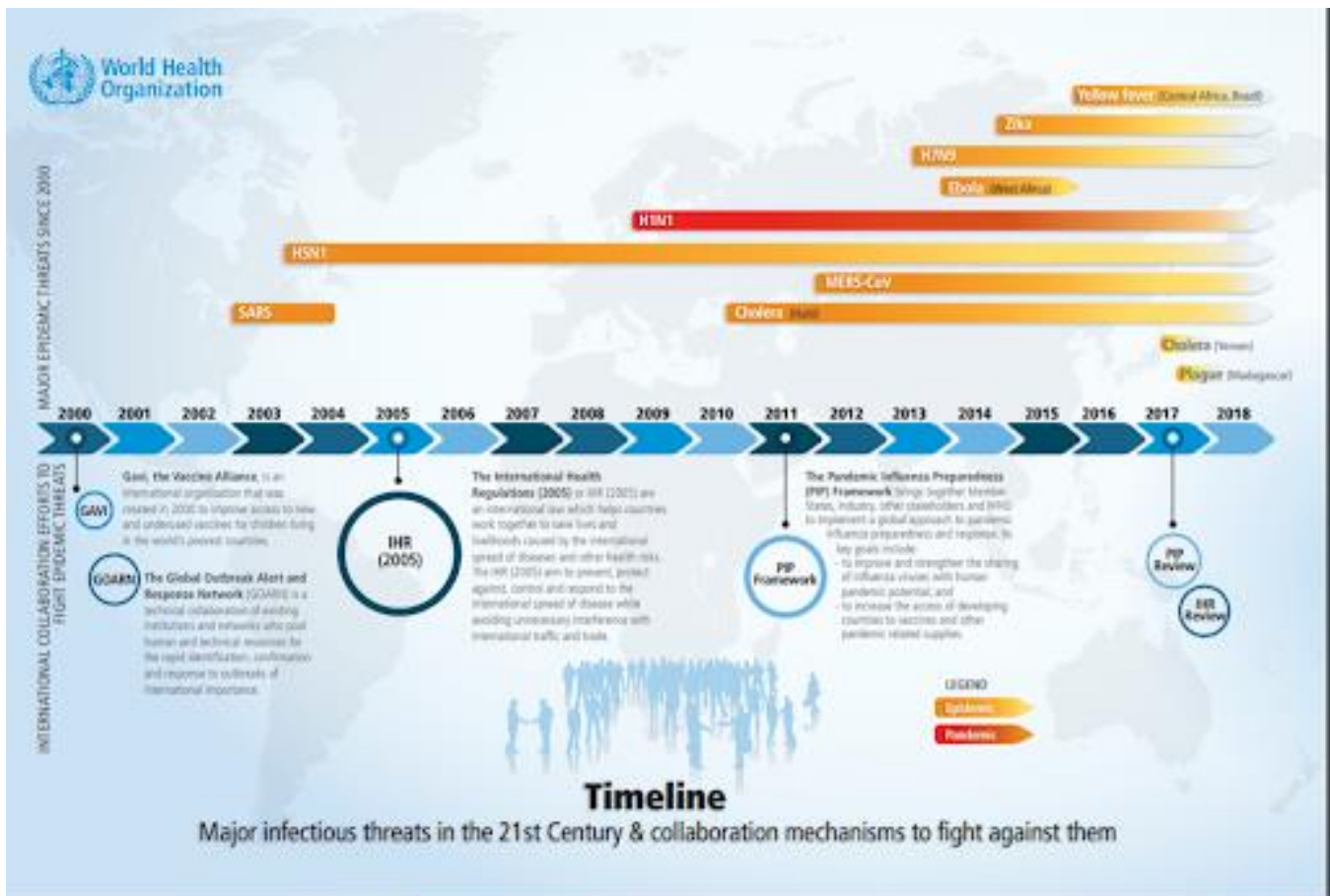


Image source: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

- Researchers have spent years trying to answer the most significant question pertaining to the epidemics which is actually concerned with the time of arrival of the pathogens.

### The 21st Century Scenario of Epidemics:

- The SARS outbreak affected more than 8000 people killing about one in ten of them spreading fear and panic across the globe accompanied by economic damage, especially in the Asian countries.
- In 2009 a novel influenza virus H1N1 started spreading as the first influenza [pandemic](#) of the 21st century.
- Within the period of 2012-13, a new virus emerged in the Middle East causing complications in the respiratory system and it was infamous as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome.
- An alarming spread of Ebola in the West African region in 2014 had spread to six other countries in three continents.

- In 2015, the [Zika virus](#) transmitted by the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito triggered a massive outbreak in Brazil. This disease caused damage to the brains of unborn babies. The Zika epidemic was experienced by 70 countries because of the presence of the mosquito species in the intertropical regions.
- 2020 witnessed the detrimental effects of the outbreak of the pandemic caused by the [Coronavirus](#).

### Challenges and Risk Factors of 21st Century Epidemics:

- **New lifestyles spread diseases further** - The fast and intense mobility of people with increased transport and international travel act as major root causes of the emergence and spread of infections. The humanitarian crises like massive displacement of populations fleeing from regions of civil unrest and political instability, refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants increase the possibilities of transmission.
- **Poor access to healthcare is a significant challenge in fighting epidemics in a country like India** - This happens due to the widening gap between the rich and the poor and ineffective policy interventions.
- **Use of traditional methods of treatment** - Usually the increase in [Antimicrobial Resistance](#) is adding to the ineffectiveness of traditional medicines. Some organisms like the Tuberculosis pathogen have already adopted multidrug resistance.
- **Equity and solidarity** - The market mechanisms do not assure a fair distribution of resources based on public health demands. This is a major concern for the low-income countries that face humanitarian challenges.
- **Epidemics of rumours** - Infodemics is a trending word in the public health domain that defines the growing rumours, gossip and unreliable information through different modes of communication technology.

### Ways Suggested for Health Reforms:

- Experts believe and suggest that a paradigm shift in the approach towards health is required. In order to do so, more investments in the health sector are recommended which should be 2.5% of the [GDP](#) in place of the existing 1.3%.
- The health system must be strengthened to improve the process of service delivery and make them responsive.
- The health infrastructure facility must be improved through interventions by the government policies.
- Awareness campaigns regarding epidemics accompanied by community participation can offer a comprehensive approach in informing and benefiting the disadvantaged sections of society. These awareness campaigns can result in the prevention of vaccine hesitancy among people.

- The focus must be on evidence, excellence and equity to make the research and innovation of diseases stronger and based on homegrown data available through surveillance, research, monitoring and evaluation.
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