



**BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU
ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.**

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Important Issues of the Day

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- **Package labelling – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **India's aviation – Page No. 8, GS 3**
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- **Loggerhead Turtles – Prelims**
- **Bharat-VISTAAR – Prelims**

Loggerhead Turtles



- **A long-term study published in *Animals* (2026) shows that loggerhead turtles are shrinking in size and producing fewer eggs due to warming oceans and declining marine productivity.**
- **The Loggerhead sea turtle is a large marine turtle known for its massive head and strong jaws. It is one of the most widely distributed sea turtles in temperate and subtropical oceans.**
- **Scientific Name: *Caretta caretta***
- **Global Distribution – Found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, and the Mediterranean Sea.**
- **Nesting Beaches – Prefers sandy, high-energy, sloped beaches for egg-laying.**
- **Major Nesting Sites – Florida (USA), Oman, Cabo Verde, Japan, and Australia.**

- **IUCN Status: Vulnerable (IUCN Red List)**

Key Characteristics:

- **Physical Features:**
- **Large Head & Powerful Jaws – Crush hard-shelled prey like mollusks and crustaceans.**
- **Reddish-Brown Carapace – Slightly heart-shaped upper shell.**
- **Long Lifespan – Can live 70–80 years or more.**

Reproductive Traits:

- **Delayed Maturity – Females mature around 30–35 years of age.**
- **Temperature-Dependent Sex Determination – Warmer sand produces more females.**

Bharat-VISTAAR



- **The Union Agriculture Minister launched Bharat-VISTAAR, an AI-powered multilingual advisory platform announced in the Union Budget 2026-27.**
- **Bharat-VISTAAR is an AI-driven multilingual Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) platform for agriculture.**
- **It provides farmers with personalised, real-time information through voice, chat, and mobile access.**
- **It functions as a single digital gateway for agricultural schemes, advisories, markets, and grievance redressal.**
- **Organisations Involved: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare is implementing authority.**

Aim:

- **Provide customised AI-based advisory to farmers: Delivers crop, weather, and market advice tailored to individual farm profiles using AI.**
- **Improve access to scheme eligibility and benefit tracking: Enables farmers to check eligibility, application status, and benefits in one place.**

Key Features:

- **Multilingual & Voice-Based Access**
- **Available initially in Hindi and English: Ensures wider early adoption among major language groups.**
- **Expansion to 11 languages in phases: Promotes inclusivity across diverse regional farmers.**
- **Toll-free helpline 155261 with AI assistant “Bharati”: Allows farmers to receive advice through simple voice calls.**

The new world disorder, from rules to might

Page No.8 , GS 2

A world that once imagined it had buried the demons of the 1930s now finds them prowling again – less dramatic, perhaps, but no less corrosive. The post-war order, born in San Francisco in 1945, was built on the conviction that law could restrain power, that institutions could discipline states, and that sovereignty was not a privilege granted by the strong but a right inherent in all nations. The speech by United States President Harry S. Truman at the founding of the United Nations (UN) radiated that belief. He spoke as a man who had seen the abyss and was determined that humanity would not return to it. The UN, he insisted, would be the instrument through which nations “settle their differences peacefully”, a bulwark against the old world of spheres of influence and predatory might.

His words, on June 26, 1945, might sound startling to many of his successors. “We all have to recognize – no matter how great our strength,” he declaimed, “that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please. No one nation ... can or should expect any special privilege which harms any other nation ... Unless we are all willing to pay that price, no organization for world peace can accomplish its purpose. And what a reasonable price that is!”

The prevailing atmosphere

Contrast that with the contemporary mood, where the language of international law increasingly sounds like a polite fiction. Analysts often perceive U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy posture as one that treats international rules much as Italian drivers treat red traffic lights, less as binding commitments and more as optional tools – useful when they serve your interests, dispensable when they do not. It is not that the U.S. invented unilateralism; great powers have always been prone to exceptionalism, double-standards and bending rules just short of breaking them. But the open embrace of a “might is right” sensibility marks a shift from hypocrisy (which at least paid tribute to norms even while betraying them) to indifference (which does not give a damn about norms). When a major power signals that sovereignty is negotiable, others take note.

If Washington can disregard Venezuela's sovereignty with minimal consequence, what stops Beijing from concluding that Taiwan's status is similarly malleable? Or Moscow from treating Ukraine as a historical correction rather than a sovereign state? Or even New Delhi from deciding that a smaller neighbour's objections are an inconvenience rather than a constraint? The question ceases to be whether international law prohibits aggression but whether the target is powerful enough to raise the costs of it. For



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As the rules-based order erodes, raw power is beginning to reshape the global system

decades, the fear of a third world war acted as a grim stabiliser; the horror of total conflict kept lesser conflicts in check. But if the guardrails weaken, the world risks not one great conflagration but a proliferation of smaller, grinding wars – each too limited to trigger global alarm, yet collectively capable of eroding the foundations of peace.

An unravelling of multilateralism

This erosion is compounded by the retreat from multilateralism. The Trump administration's declared withdrawal from dozens of international organisations and agreements – ranging from UNESCO to WHO to environmental and arms-control frameworks – signals a deeper scepticism about the very idea of shared governance. The problem is that the 21st century's most urgent challenges are precisely those that no nation can solve alone. Pandemics, climate change, cyber threats, financial contagion – these are “problems without passports” (in Kofi Annan's phrase), indifferent to borders and immune to unilateral solutions. When the world's most powerful state steps back from collective action, the vacuum does not remain empty. Others – most notably China – step in, shaping institutions, norms and standards in ways that reflect their own preferences. The result is not simply a shift in influence but a fragmentation of global governance itself.

We inhabit a world that has become profoundly fluid. It is increasingly difficult for any nation, not only India, to say with certainty where it stands in a shifting geopolitical order. Old certainties have frayed, alliances blur and ambiguity has become the defining condition of our time. History, that indefatigable saboteur of good intentions, continues to complicate the present. Grievances are inherited more reliably than wisdom. Old wars cast long shadows and unresolved injustices continue to poison relations between states. Leaders are asked to negotiate peace while being reminded never to forget past wounds.

Perhaps the most profound obstacle lies in the paradox of power itself. Those entrusted with maintaining global order also possess the greatest capacity to disrupt it. World order rested on their willingness not to do so; this willingness has faded in many cases. The institutions established after the Second World War were noble in conception but unequal in design. They reflected the hierarchies of power prevailing at the time of their creation. Authority was concentrated in the hands of a few, while responsibility was shared by all. This imbalance has consequences. When powerful states act as both guardians and exceptions to the rules, the legitimacy of the system suffers.

What makes this moment especially fraught is that the rule-based liberal international order was never a monolith; it was a patchwork of norms, institutions and habits of cooperation. Its ingredients included sovereign equality, non-aggression, collective security, open trade, human rights and multilateral problem-solving. Each of these has been violated repeatedly – by great powers and smaller states alike. Yet, the order endured because enough states believed that the alternative was worse. Today, that belief is wavering. Sovereignty is breached with increasing brazenness. Non-aggression is honoured in the breach. Collective security is paralysed by vetoes. Trade is weaponised. Human rights are dismissed as ideological. Multilateral institutions are starved of legitimacy and resources.

Institutions may possess statutes and mandates, yet, without political will, their authority remains largely aspirational. When powerful states ignore international law or apply it selectively, institutions lose credibility. Peace cannot be enforced by rules alone. It requires good faith, and good faith is increasingly in short supply.

The danger today

And yet, the order is not dead. It limps, it strains, it disappoints – but it persists. International courts still adjudicate disputes. Peacekeepers still deploy. Trade flows still depend on predictable rules. Middle powers, from Europe to India to South Africa to Canada to Brazil, still invest in multilateralism because they know that without it, they are at the mercy of ruthlessly self-interested hegemonies. They accept Dag Hammarskjöld's famous dictum that “the United Nations was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell”. Sometimes the best the world order can do is to prevent things from getting worse.

And yet the question is not whether the old order survives intact; it has already been hollowed out, its norms and institutions subverted. The question is what replaces it: a Sino-centric architecture, a world of competing blocs, a patchwork of issue-based coalitions, or a return to unmediated anarchy?

We are living in an interregnum – the old world fading, the new one unformed. The danger is not that the system collapses overnight, but that it decays slowly, leaving a vacuum filled by opportunism and coercion. The promise of 1945 was that law could tame power. The peril of today is that power may once again tame law. The task for this generation is not to resurrect the past but to prevent the future from sliding into a world where the only real rule is that there are no rules at all.

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Mains Question

“The emerging Sino-centric global order challenges the post-1945 liberal international system.” Critically examine.

“उभरती हुई चीन-केन्द्रित वैश्विक व्यवस्था (Sino-centric global order) 1945 के बाद स्थापित उदार अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था को चुनौती देती है।” समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए।

Front and centre

Front-of-package labelling helps consumers to choose health foods

In a further instalment of its continuing engagement with regulating processed food products, the Supreme Court of India has, once again, staked out for the right of citizens to health. In a recent judgment, a Bench directed the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to consider introducing mandatory front-of-package warning labels on packaged food products high in sugar, salt and saturated fat. Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan directed the FSSAI to file its response to the proposal within four weeks. There is adequate evidence available to associate these sugar, salt and saturated fat additives in processed foods with non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases, all of which are inching up their way up to epidemic proportions in India. The petitioner, the NGO 3S and Our Health Society, informed the Court that such disclosures would enable consumers to make informed decisions and choices and could help with stemming the tide of rising deaths due to diabetes and heart ailments. Earlier, in 2025, the Court had directed an expert committee under the FSSAI to submit its recommendations on the amendments required to be made to the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020,

to implement front-of-package labelling. On the count of holding consultations with all stakeholders across the country, an extension was sought and secured, but in February 2026, the Bench expressed unhappiness at the regulator's compliance report, noting that the exercise undertaken thus far had failed to yield any "positive or good result". One of the elements of contention between the FSSAI and the petitioner was the former's proposal to introduce an Indian Nutrition Rating model, an indigenous system of rating a product; the latter opposed it on the grounds that this was not in line with globally accepted standards.

The Court's persistent intervention on the issue of front-of-package labelling should lean on the massive ultra-processed food industry to implement these universally endorsed safeguards, to inform consumers of the content and additives in the packaged food, to guide choices, ultimately. Non-communicable diseases have already swept through vast swathes of the population in the country: the 2023 ICMR-INDIAB study found that 101 million people in India (11.4% of the population) have diabetes, with an additional 136 million suffering from prediabetes. Other concomitant factors including hypertension (35.5% national average), abdominal obesity (39.5%) and high cholesterol (24%) were also estimated to be high. Introducing front-of-package labelling is an essential part of establishing a continuum of care that begins with prevention.

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- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act).**
- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI.**
- **Headquarters: Delhi.**

- **Framing of regulations to lay down the standards and guidelines of food safety.**

- **Granting FSSAI food safety license and certification for food businesses.**
- **Laying down procedure and guidelines for laboratories in food businesses.**
- **To provide suggestions to the government in framing the policies.**
- **To collect data regarding contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of rapid alert system.**

Mains Question

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) have emerged as the leading cause of mortality in India. Examine the socio-economic determinants of NCDs and evaluate the effectiveness of government interventions.

असंक्रामक रोग (Non-Communicable Diseases) भारत में मृत्यु के प्रमुख कारण के रूप में उभरे हैं। इनके सामाजिक-आर्थिक निर्धारकों का परीक्षण कीजिए तथा सरकारी हस्तक्षेपों की प्रभावशीलता का मूल्यांकन कीजिए।

India's aviation is in need of data-driven oversight

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IndiGo, India's largest airline, faced an operational crisis in December 2025, leading to a surge in fares across the country. This episode underscored a broader issue: India is becoming the world's third-largest aviation market without building the data systems required to oversee it.

In this case, regulators quickly stepped in to protect consumer interests. The Ministry of Civil Aviation imposed temporary price caps on domestic flights and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), prompted by the Competition Commission of India, requested average fare data from IndiGo, Air India, SpiceJet and Akasa between December 1-15, 2025, to investigate potential abuse of market dominance.

While this reactive approach protects air passengers in the short term, it highlights a larger regulatory gap. Even with the requested data, regulators may still lack the visibility needed to act effectively. Without a consistent, analytical framework to study fares over time, it becomes difficult to distinguish between a legitimate, demand-driven spike and a surge that crosses into an abuse of market power.

Airline data in the U.S. creates a digital trail

These events are an opportunity to shift the DGCA's role from crisis response to steady oversight by learning from examples of the more mature airline market in the United States. Specifically, the way the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) collects and publishes airline data.

The BTS maintains the Airline Origin and Destination survey, more commonly known as the DBIB database. Unlike the DGCA, which primarily tracks passenger volumes and freight traffic, the DBIB database publishes ticket-level data, including fares, for a 10% random sample of all domestic tickets sold each quarter since 1995.

This is not a mere academic exercise. By



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The December 2025 IndiGo crisis highlights India's lack of a data-driven aviation framework and a regulatory gap

collecting data on actual prices paid, itinerary details such as route flown, and carrier information, the BTS creates a usable digital trail. For India, adopting a similar 10% sampling framework would signal a new era of transparency, expanding the DGCA's role from tracking volumes to monitoring market behaviour. Much like a speed camera on a highway, the objective is not necessarily to issue penalties, but to encourage long-term compliance and maintain market hygiene.

The effect of transparency on pricing

Greater transparency also pushes airlines to self-regulate their pricing algorithms. When fare data are open to the public or regulatory scrutiny, carriers are more likely to build ethical guardrails into their revenue management systems, preventing both opportunistic and algorithm-driven price spikes that can trigger public backlash and legal challenges, such as the ongoing Public Interest Litigation before the Supreme Court of India.

The availability of historical pricing data can also strengthen research and policy. For example, over 30 years of US airline data is publicly available through the DBIB database. Academic researchers have used these data to identify the "Southwest Effect" – a phenomenon in the U.S. where the entry of Southwest Airlines, a low-cost U.S. carrier, into a new route leads to a drop in average fares and a corresponding spike in average passenger traffic.

A similar dataset in India can allow regulators to observe competitive behaviour, or the lack of it, across routes, time periods and market structures.

First, comparing fares on different routes. If routes dominated by a single airline consistently show higher fares than those with multiple players, it may indicate market power.

Second, tracking fare changes when

competitors enter or exit a route. A sharp rise in fares after a competitor exits, or a drop when one enters, signals that the remaining carriers can exercise market power.

Third, assessing fare behaviour during demand spikes. If an airline raises prices more aggressively on routes where it has a larger market share during holidays or peak periods, it may be leveraging its dominance.

The usual resistance to data transparency stems from concerns over proprietary information, claims that data sharing creates a technical load, and fear of implicit coordination among competitors.

A 10% random sample is reasonable

Airlines might argue that their revenue management algorithms are their "secret sauce" and should be protected. A 10% random sample is a practical middle ground. By design, this framework collects a fraction of the data. This helps to protect the "how", i.e., the proprietary logic and code behind the algorithms while monitoring the "what", i.e., the price at which tickets were sold in the marketplace. And given the limited size of the sample, supplying this data should not pose a significant technical burden.

Critics may also fear that transparency allows airlines to track each other's prices. In the age of real-time data scraping, this is simply the status quo, as airlines already have a good sense of what their competitors are charging. By releasing the 10% sample on a quarterly delay, regulators can reduce the chance of immediate fare alignment while preserving the dataset's usefulness for long-term policy planning.

Thus, the DGCA must pivot from ad hoc fare caps and investigations to a data-first framework. It is time to let the algorithms compete but also let the regulator and the public keep score.

The views expressed are personal

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- **In this case, regulators quickly stepped in to protect consumer interests. The Ministry of Civil Aviation imposed temporary price caps on domestic flights and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), prompted by the Competition Commission of India, requested average fare data from IndiGo, Air India, SpiceJet and Akasa between December 1-15, 2025, to investigate potential abuse of market dominance.**
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- **These events are an opportunity to shift the DGCA's role from crisis response to steady oversight by learning from examples of the more mature airline market in the United States. Specifically, the way the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) collects and publishes airline data.**
- **The BTS maintains the Airline Origin and Destination survey, more commonly known as the DB1B database. Unlike the DGCA, which primarily tracks passenger volumes and freight traffic, the DB1B database publishes ticket-level data, including fares, for a 10% random sample of all domestic tickets sold each quarter since 1995.**
- **For India, adopting a similar 10% sampling framework would signal a new era of transparency, expanding the DGCA's role from tracking volumes to monitoring market behaviour. Much like a speed camera on a highway, the objective is not necessarily to issue penalties, but to encourage long-term compliance and maintain market hygiene.**

- **The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialized UN agency established by the Chicago Convention in 1944 to regulate global civil aviation.**
- **It sets international standards and procedures for the safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally sustainable development of air transport.**
- **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA):**
- **The DGCA is India's statutory civil aviation regulator responsible for ensuring aviation safety, airworthiness, and compliance with global standards.**
- **Originally created in 1927 (as a government organization)**
- **Became a statutory body in 2020 under the Aircraft (Amendment) Act.**
- **Functions under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA).**

Lower beedi taxes are short-term gain but long-term pain

Beedis are taxed much lower than cigarettes but they pose serious health risks, in many cases exceeding those of cigarettes

DATA POINT

Devvyanshi Bihani

If increasing cigarette taxes is a public health measure to discourage smoking, then lowering beedi taxes to 'protect' rural workers ignores the long-term cost to their lives. While most tobacco products are taxed at the highest Goods and Services Tax (GST) slab of 40%, beedis are taxed at just 18%, making them significantly cheaper than cigarettes and other forms of tobacco. The latest tax rates became effective this month.

Several government reports affirm that beedis are no less lethal than cigarettes. In fact, studies quoted in reports suggest that cancer incidence is often higher among beedi smokers. Given that cancer treatment costs three times more than other ailments – even in public hospitals – capping beedi taxes is a short-sighted subsidy.

A critical distinction between beedi and cigarette consumption lies in demographics. Data suggest that there is a substantial overlap between the labour force that rolls beedis and the primary consumer base. While cigarette smokers lack a defining demographic profile, beedi consumption is confined to a much more specific socio-economic segment.

Data from the National Family Health Survey show that beedi smoking is most pronounced among older rural men from the poorest 20% of the population. So, keeping beedi taxes low may enable workers to save a few coins in their youth, only for those savings to be eroded by the exorbitant cost of healthcare in later years.

Tobacco use in India is overwhelmingly concentrated among men. As of 2019-21, about 13.3% of men smoked cigarettes, while 7.8% smoked beedis. Among women, smoking rates were around 0.1% or lower. Beedi smoking was almost twice as prevalent in rural areas (8.3%) compared to urban areas

(4.5%) among men (Chart 1).

While beedi smokers represent a relatively smaller share of the population than cigarette smokers, their frequency of consumption is significantly higher. Data reveal a stark divide: over 80% of beedi smokers consumed more than five sticks daily, whereas over 70% of cigarette smokers consumed fewer than five (Chart 2). So, an important distinction is that beedi policy should not just look at the number of people smoking; it needs to look at how much they are actually smoking.

The divide is more pronounced across education and age. While cigarette smoking is distributed relatively evenly across all schooling levels, beedi use is heavily concentrated among those with the lowest education levels. While younger and middle-aged men largely prefer cigarettes, beedi consumption is disproportionately prevalent among the older population.

Also, while there is almost no caste-based difference in cigarette smoking, beedi use shows a slight shift. Over 15% of the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations smoke cigarettes, which is similar to the share among the general category. With beedis, however, the numbers tilt slightly: 10.6% of the SC population smokes them, compared to 7% in the general category.

The economic disparity in tobacco choice is stark: while wealth has little impact on cigarette consumption, it is the primary driver of beedi use. Among India's poorest households, the share of beedi and cigarette smokers is nearly identical (around 14-15%). However, as household wealth increases, beedi consumption plummets. In the richest households, while cigarette use remains steady at 11.5%, beedi consumption drops to just 2.1% (Chart 3).

The 2022 Report on Tobacco Control in India indicates that beedi smoking poses serious health risks, in many cases exceeding those of cigarettes. The report

highlights striking differences in respiratory risk: beedi smokers are 2.87 times more likely to suffer from asthma, compared to 1.82 times for cigarette smokers.

Cancer risks show a similar pattern. A Mumbai cohort study found that beedi smokers faced a higher risk of all cancers than cigarette smokers, with particularly elevated risks for lung and laryngeal cancers. Tuberculosis mortality is also more severe, with beedi smokers facing 2.6 times the risk of death. "Poor people who are the main consumers of beedis end up spending more on health care," said health economist Rijo John. "That is only going to increase the existing inequality between the poor and the rich."

The Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2016-17 (GATS-2) shows that the average monthly expenditure of Indians on tobacco rose for both cigarette and beedi users, but for very different reasons. Daily smokers spent about ₹1,192 per month on cigarettes, up from ₹668 in 2009-10 (GATS-1), and spent ₹284 per month on beedis, up from ₹156, after adjusting for inflation.

For cigarettes, this increase was largely price-driven, the survey argued. The number of cigarettes smoked per day did not rise significantly between GATS-1 and GATS-2, indicating that higher spending reflects higher taxes and prices, rather than higher consumption. On the other hand, the number of beedis smoked per day increased significantly between the two surveys, driving up overall expenditure. This suggests that tax policy has been effective in containing cigarette consumption, but not beedi use.

John said specific excise is considered a better form of taxation in regulating consumption. "If the tax is levied solely on the basis of the quantity consumed, we pay the same tax whether the beedi is sold at a lower price or at a higher price by the manufacturer. This directly discourages consumption," he said.

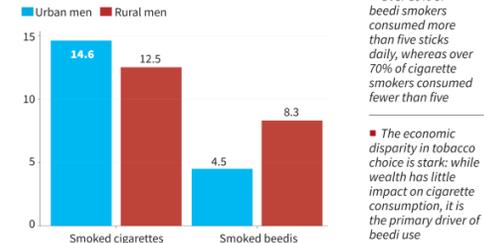
No smoke without harm

The data for the charts were sourced from the National Family Health Survey-5, the Global Adult Tobacco Survey Second Round India (2016-2017) and the Report on Tobacco Control in India (2022)



Many among labour force that roll beedis also consume them

CHART 1: The percentage of men aged 15-54 who smoked cigarettes and beedis across urban and rural populations as of 2019-21



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CHART 2: Distribution of male smokers by the number of units consumed per day as of 2019-21

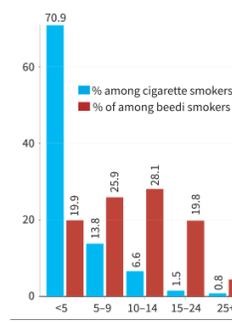
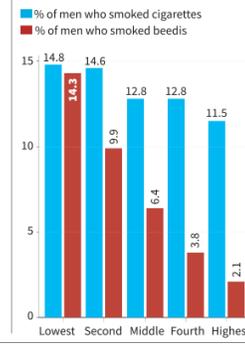


CHART 3: The percentage of men who smoked cigarettes and beedis across wealth quintiles as of 2019-21



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- **Among women, smoking rates were around 0.1% or lower. Beedi smoking was almost twice as prevalent in rural areas (8.3%) compared to urban areas (4.5%) among men**
- **The economic disparity in tobacco choice is stark: while wealth has little impact on cigarette consumption, it is the primary driver of beedi use.**
- **Among India's poorest households, the share of beedi and cigarette smokers is nearly identical (around 14-15%). However, as household wealth increases, beedi consumption plummets. In the richest households, while cigarette use remains steady at 11.5%, beedi consumption drops to just 2.1%**

Thank You!

