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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

The Case for One Health – Why India Must Move Beyond Siloed Health Systems

THE HINDU

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The Case for One Health — Why India Must Move Beyond Siloed Health Systems



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CONTEXT

On **World Health Day 2026** (April 7, theme: “Together for Health. Stand with Science”), **The Hindu editorial** makes the case for India to fully operationalise the **“One Health” approach** — an integrated framework that recognises the interdependence of human, animal, and environmental health. The editorial draws on lessons from COVID-19, the 2025 H5N1 avian influenza outbreak in Southeast Asia, and the **2025 WHO Pandemic Agreement** to argue that India’s siloed health governance — where human health (Ministry of Health), animal health (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying), and environmental health (MoEFCC) are administered separately — leaves critical surveillance gaps at the animal-human-environment interface.

THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

1. Why One Health Is Not a New Idea But an Urgent One

The editorial traces the “One Health” concept to veterinary scientists of the 19th century (Rudolf Virchow’s “zoonosis” framework, 1855) and notes that roughly **60% of all known human infectious diseases are zoonotic** — originating in animals before jumping to humans. COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2, likely bat coronavirus), SARS, MERS, Ebola, Nipah, and H5N1 all originated at the animal-human-environment interface. The editorial argues that India — with its dense population, high livestock density, and shared wildlife-human habitat interfaces — is uniquely exposed.

2. The 2025 WHO Pandemic Agreement

The **WHO Pandemic Agreement** (adopted May 2025) mandates member states to:

- Establish integrated **zoonotic disease surveillance** linking animal and human health at the interface
- Share **pathogen samples and genomic sequences** with WHO and other states
- Build **PABS (Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing)** systems

- Strengthen primary healthcare and **One Health institutional capacity**

India signed the Agreement and is required to develop an implementation plan.

3. India's National One Health Mission — Potential and Gaps

India's **National One Health Mission** (announced in Union Budget 2023-24) creates a framework for integrating:

- Human health surveillance (IDSP — Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme)
- Animal disease surveillance (NADCP — National Animal Disease Control Programme)
- Environmental pathogen monitoring (ENVIS network under MoEFCC)

The editorial endorses this Mission but notes:

- **Veterinary infrastructure** in India is severely underfunded — state governments treat it as a low-priority department
- **Wildlife health monitoring** is almost non-existent — the forest department and wildlife institute are not formally linked to disease surveillance
- **One Health laboratories** (proposed in 16 states) face budget constraints and skilled staffing shortages

4. Nipah as a Case Study for One Health Relevance

Kerala's **Nipah outbreaks** (2018, 2023) demonstrate the value of rapid human-animal-environment integration:

- 2018: Fruit bats (*Pteropus medius*) identified as reservoir within weeks
- 2023: Contact tracing extended to bat roost sites; forestry and health departments coordinated
- Yet: no permanent One Health surveillance infrastructure was created; each outbreak required crisis-mode improvisation



KEY INSTITUTIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

INSTITUTION / FRAMEWORK	ROLE
WHO Pandemic Agreement (2025)	Mandates zoonotic surveillance, PABS, One Health capacity
National One Health Mission	India's federal programme (2023-24)
IDSP	Human disease surveillance (Ministry of Health)
NADCP	Animal disease control programme (DAHD)
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization — livestock disease monitoring
ENVIS (MoEFCC)	Environmental information network — limited disease linkage
NiV Task Force (Kerala)	State-level One Health response template (improvised)

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 — Health, International Organisations

- One Health approach — WHO, FAO, WOA, UNEP quadripartite joint plan
- WHO Pandemic Agreement — PABS, pathogen sharing, equity debates
- India's disease surveillance — IDSP, NADCP, state health departments

GS Paper 3 — Environment

- Zoonotic diseases as an environmental health issue
- Biodiversity loss and pandemic risk — deforestation, wildlife trade, spillover

Mains Angle

“India's fragmented health governance — with separate ministries for human, animal, and environmental health — creates critical gaps in pandemic preparedness. Critically examine with reference to the One Health approach.” (GS2 + GS3)



FACTS CORNER

ITEM	FACT
World Health Day theme 2026	“Together for Health. Stand with Science”
World Health Day date	April 7 annually (WHO founding: April 7, 1948)
Zoonotic disease share	~60% of human infectious diseases are zoonotic
Key zoonotic diseases	COVID-19, SARS, MERS, Nipah, Ebola, H5N1, Rabies
WHO Pandemic Agreement	Adopted May 2025; mandates One Health integration
National One Health Mission	Announced Budget 2023-24
Nipah outbreaks in India	2018 (Kerala), 2023 (Kerala) — fruit bats as reservoir
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health (previously OIE)
One Health framework pillars	Human + Animal + Environmental health
IDSP	Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (human health)

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