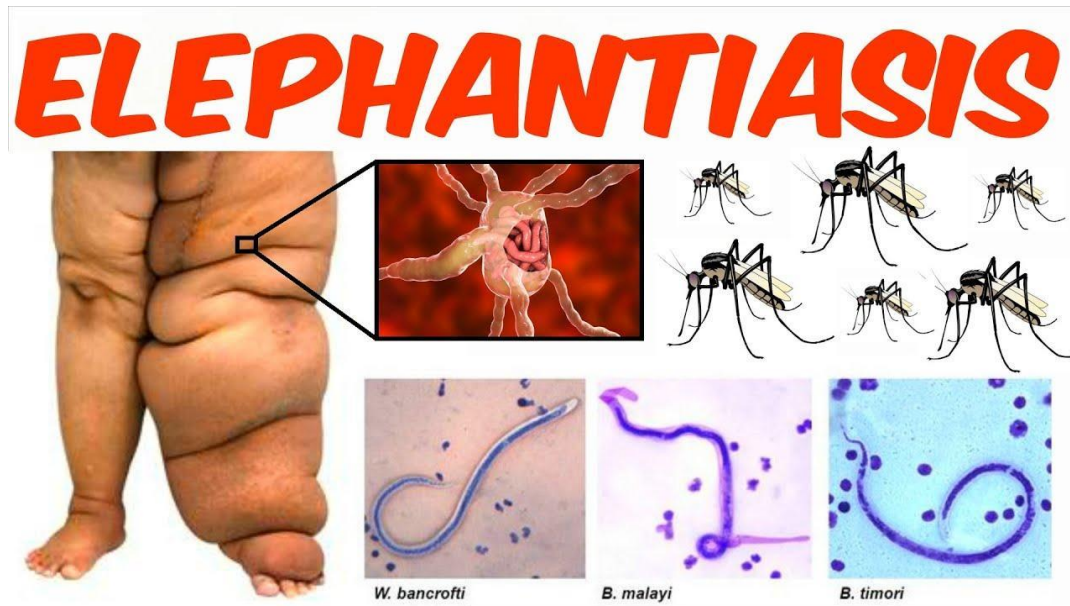


CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 13-08-2023

Lymphatic Filariasis

Union Health & Family Welfare Minister Mansukh Mandaviya declared that India is committed to eradicating Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027, surpassing the global target by three years.



Lymphatic Filariasis

- Filariasis is a disease caused by a chronic mosquito-borne parasitic infection. Chronic infection can lead to swelling of the extremities, hydroceles, and testicular masses.
- It is the second-largest cause of permanent deformity and disability behind leprosy worldwide.
- The Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis is providing mass drug administrations (MDA) to populations in endemic areas in a push to eradicate this disease.
- Causes- Three species of nematode parasites: *Wuchereria bancrofti*, *Brugia malayi*, and *Brugia timori*
- Vectors- *Aedes*, *Anopheles*, *Culex*, *Mansonia*, and *Ochlerotatus*.
- The state of Bihar has the highest endemicity (over 17%) followed by Kerala (15.7%) and Uttar Pradesh (14.6%).
- Humans are the primary reservoir for this parasitic disease, and mosquitoes are the vectors.



Main challenge

The major challenge with the currently available drugs is that the interruption of transmission requires very high treatment coverage (probably > 85% of the total population) to achieve elimination.

Current approaches to drug delivery do not achieve this (only 40-60% get treated if mass treatment is executed by regular health services).

There is an urgent need for more effective drug delivery strategies for lymphatic filariasis elimination that are adapted to regional differences and variations in health sector development.

Filariasis Control in India

After a pilot project in Orissa from 1949 to 1954, the National Filaria Control Programme (NFCP) was launched in the country in 1955, to delimit the problem, to undertake control measures in endemic areas and to train personnel to man the programme.

India is committed to eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027, three years ahead of the global target through mission mode, multi-partner, multi-sector, targeted drive for which we have drawn up the roadmap”.

OVERHAUL OF BRITISH-ERA CRIMINAL LAWS

The union Home minister presented three Bills in the Lok Sabha to abolish the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure, which were enacted during British rule.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023 proposes the death penalty as the highest punishment for mob lynching and recommends ten years of jail for having sex with

The need for reforming the criminal justice system in India has been felt for a long time. The current laws are based on the colonial legacy and do not reflect the contemporary realities and aspirations of Indian society.

The laws are also outdated, complex, and ambiguous, leading to delays, inefficiencies, and injustices in the delivery of justice. Moreover, the laws are not in sync with the constitutional values and principles of India, such as equality, dignity, secularism, and human rights. Therefore, there has been a demand from various quarters, including the judiciary, the legal fraternity, civil society, and the public, to revamp the criminal justice system in India.



The proposed bills include the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Bill, 2023; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) Bill, 2023; and the Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) Bill, 2023. These bills aim to replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

These bills are based on the Indian ethos and culture. The bills also aim to simplify, rationalize, and modernize the criminal justice system in India.

Objectives of the bills

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Bill introduces new categories of offences, such as cybercrimes, terrorism, hate crimes, honour crimes, mob lynching, etc. It provides special provisions for women, children, senior citizens, and other vulnerable sections of society.

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) Bill seeks to ensure the protection of the rights and interests of the victims, witnesses and accused persons in the criminal justice process. It provides for speedy and fair trials, effective investigation and prosecution, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, victim compensation and rehabilitation schemes, witness protection programmes, etc.

The Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) Bill provides for scientific and technological advancements in evidence collection and analysis, such as DNA testing, narco-analysis, brain mapping, etc. It lays down guidelines for admissibility and relevancy of evidence, burden and standard of proof, a presumption of innocence and guilt, etc.

Highlights of the Bill

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill 2023 prescribes capital punishment as the maximum sentence for mob lynching.

The bill suggests 10 years of imprisonment for sexual intercourse with women on the false promise of marriage.

The bill states that sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, when the wife is not under 18 years of age, is not considered rape.

Repeal of Sedition Section

The bills provide definitions for terrorism and offences such as separatism, armed rebellion against the government, and challenging the sovereignty of the country.

Confiscation of property can be done based on court orders.

The bills aim to provide speedy justice and create a legal system that aligns with contemporary needs and aspirations.



In cases of sexual violence against women, the video recording of survivor statements is made compulsory.

Police must inform about the status of a complaint within 90 days. Consultation with the victim is required before withdrawing a case punishable by seven years or more.

Community service is being introduced for specific crimes.

The maximum time to file a chargesheet is fixed at 180 days. An additional 90 days can be granted by the court, but it cannot exceed that.

The government must decide prosecution sanctions against police officers and civil servants within 120 days, or it will be deemed permitted.

Videography of search and seizure is made compulsory, and a chargesheet won't be accepted without it.

Forensic collection of evidence is made compulsory for all crimes punishable by seven years.

A designated police officer will certify the custody of an accused to their relatives, both online and physically.

Rules for remission of sentences are stricter to prevent individuals with political influence from benefiting disproportionately.

Expected Outcome

The bills will bring about a paradigm shift from a punitive and retributive approach to a restorative and rehabilitative approach in criminal justice.

It will promote a human rights-based approach that respects the dignity and rights of all stakeholders in the criminal justice process.

It will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system by reducing delays, pendency, backlog, and corruption.

It will improve the quality and credibility of justice delivery by ensuring transparency, accountability, and professionalism.

It will foster a culture of peace and harmony in society by preventing and curbing crimes that threaten social order and security.

It will address the root causes of crimes by addressing socio-economic inequalities and injustices.

It will strengthen the rule of law and democracy in India by upholding constitutional values and principles.



Challenges

The bills may face opposition and resistance from some quarters who may perceive them as an infringement on their rights, interests, or autonomy.

It may face legal challenges and scrutiny from the courts on the grounds of constitutionality, validity, or interpretation of certain provisions.

It may face practical difficulties and bottlenecks in implementation due to a lack of awareness, cooperation, or coordination among various agencies or stakeholders.

It may face unforeseen consequences or implications that may require further amendments or modifications in the future.

Way forward

Address the concerns and apprehensions of various stakeholders and build consensus and support for these bills.

Ensure that the bills are passed by both houses of Parliament without any dilution or delay.

Ensure that the bills are notified and enforced in a phased and time-bound manner across the country.

Ensure that the bills are monitored and evaluated periodically and that any gaps or glitches are rectified promptly.

Conclusion

The criminal justice system is the backbone of any democracy. It is essential to ensure that it is fair, efficient, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people.

The introduction of these bills is a historic opportunity to achieve this goal. It is hoped that these bills will usher in a new era of criminal justice reform in India and make it a model for other countries to emulate.

KATCHATHEEVU

Katchatheevu is an uninhabited off-shore island in the Palk Strait. The island is located between Neduntheevu, Sri Lanka and Rameswaram, India. It was formed due to volcanic eruptions in the 14th century.

Fishermen of both countries have been fishing in each other's waters without conflict for a very long time. The issue emerged when both countries signed four



Maritime Boundary Agreements between 1974-76. The agreement marked the international maritime boundary of India and Sri Lanka.

In 1974, then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi accepted Katchatheevu as a Sri Lankan area under the "Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Agreement" aimed at resolving the maritime boundaries in the Palk Strait.

Another agreement signed in 1976 restricted both the countries' fishermen from fishing in the other's exclusive economic zones.

The agreement aimed to facilitate resource management and law enforcement in the Palk Strait. Now, Indian fishermen were only allowed to use the island for resting, net drying and the annual St. Anthony's festival.

They are not permitted to use the island for fishing. However, Indian fishermen continued trespassing the Sri Lankan water boundary, searching for better catch in the area.

The next few decades went well but the problem turned serious when fish and aquatic life in the Indian continental shelf depleted, which resulted in an increased number of Indian fishermen in the region. They are also using modern fishing trolleys which harm marine life and the ecosystem.

India's forex reserves drop USD 2.42 billion to USD 601.45 billion

India's forex reserves dropped for the third consecutive week, declining by USD 2.417 billion to USD 601.45 billion as of August 4.

Foreign exchange reserves (about, composition, role, factors affecting forex reserves)

Foreign Exchange reserves or Forex reserves are assets such as foreign currencies, gold reserves, treasury bills, etc retained by a central bank or other monetary authority.

RBI is the custodian of the Foreign exchange reserves in India.

It checks the balance payments and influences the foreign exchange rate of its currency and maintains stability in financial markets.

Composition of India's Forex Reserves

The Foreign exchange reserves of India consists of four categories:

- Foreign Currency Assets
- Gold
- SDR



The SDR is an international reserve asset used by the IMF for internal accounting purposes.

Also known as paper gold, the value of SDR is based on a basket of five currencies - the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.

Reserve with the International Monetary Fund (also known as reserve tranche position) Reserve tranche position is the difference between the IMF's holdings of that country's currency and the country's IMF-designated quota.

Role of the Foreign Exchange Reserve

It ensures that RBI has backup funds if their national currency rapidly devalues or becomes altogether insolvent.

If the value of the Rupee decreases due to an increase in demand of the foreign currency, then RBI sells the dollar in the Indian money market so that depreciation of the Indian currency can be checked.

A country with a good stock of forex has a good image at the international level because the trading countries can be sure about their payments.

A good forex reserve helps in attracting foreign trade and earns a good reputation in trading partners.

Factors affecting Forex Reserve

FPI inflows - Greater FPI inflows increase the forex reserve.

FDI inflows - Greater the FDI inflows, greater will be the forex reserves.

Dip in crude oil prices - Since India is an oil importing currency, dip in crude oil prices increases the forex reserves.

Import savings - Reduction in imports increases the foreign exchange reserves.

Dip in gold imports - Gold is a big import component for India. Dip in gold imports increases the forex reserve.

News Summary: India's forex reserves drop USD 2.42 billion to USD 601.45 billion

According to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI, India's forex reserves dropped for the third consecutive week.

The foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 1.937 billion to USD 533.40 billion.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

In the reporting week:

Gold reserves were down by USD 224 million to USD 44.68 billion. Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 171 million to USD 18.27 billion. Country's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 86 million to USD 5.099 billion.

Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve

NNTR was notified as 46th tiger reserve of India on 12th December, 2013. It is situated in Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra. Gondia District shares common boundaries with the state of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the north and eastern side respectively.



Strategically, the Tiger Reserve is located in the heart of central Indian Tiger landscape which contributes almost one sixth of the total tiger population of the country.

Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve has connectivity with the major tiger reserves in Central India like,

- Kanha and Pench tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh,
- Tadoba-Andhari Tiger reserve in Maharashtra,
- Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh,

It is also connected to important tiger bearing areas like Umred-Karhandla sanctuary and Brahampuri Division (Maharashtra).

It is one of the six Tiger reserve of Maharashtra

- Melghat Tiger reserve (1974)
- Tadoba Tiger Reserve (1993)
- Pench Tiger Reserve (1999)
- Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (2007)
- Bor Tiger Reserve (2014)

Glyphosate

Experts have recently warned pesticide sellers against the sale and storage of glyphosate as its exposure is known to cause cancer.



About Glyphosate:

Glyphosate is a widely used herbicide that can kill certain weeds and grasses. It is used primarily in agriculture but also in forestry and lawn and garden care.

Glyphosate is a small molecule made of a linear carbon chain with weaker bonds, which makes glyphosate less persistent in the environment. In India, it goes by various brand names, including Roundup, Glycel+, and Brake.

Herbicidal Action:

- Glyphosate works by inhibiting an enzyme called EPSP synthase, which is essential for the synthesis of certain amino acids that plants need for growth.

- By disrupting this enzyme, glyphosate interferes with the plant's ability to produce proteins, leading to the eventual death of the plant.
- Broad-Spectrum:
- Glyphosate is considered a broad-spectrum herbicide, meaning it can effectively control a wide variety of plants, including grasses, broadleaf plants, and woody plants.
- It is effective only on plants that grow above the water. It will not be effective on plants that are submerged or have most of their foliage underwater, nor will it control regrowth from seed.

Nature:

- Glyphosate is a systemic herbicide, which means it is absorbed by the plant's leaves and then translocated throughout the plant's vascular system.
- This allows it to reach various parts of the plant, including the roots, leading to effective control of both above-ground and below-ground plant parts.
- Glyphosate is degraded in soil and water by microbes and binds tightly to soil particles, which prevents the leaching of glyphosate into groundwater.
- Glyphosate does not degrade quickly in plants. As a result, it is possible that glyphosate residues can occur in food products.

Indian Flying Fox bat

It is a species of flying fox native to the Indian subcontinent. It is one of the largest bats in the world. The nectar and fruit-eating flying fox (*Pteropus giganteus*) is generally considered vermin as they raid orchards. It is a keystone species causing seed dispersals of many plants in tropical systems.





Appearance: The Indian flying fox is so called due to its unique, fox-like appearance: reddish-brown coat, characteristically long snout as well as large eyes. And indeed, this animal resembles a little fox with wings.

Diet: They maintain a frugivorous diet, supplementing it with insects as well as flowers, containing juice and nectar.

Threat: Being external roosters, the flying fox is exposed to predators and disturbances apart from environmental indicators such as heat and light.

Conservation status

IUCN: Least concern

The Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972: Schedule II

UNFPA

A project of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for gender sensitivity in Rajasthan has received support from the experts working for the elimination of customs promoting patriarchy.

It is an international development agency created in 1968 to support the execution of projects and programmes in the area of population and sexual and reproductive health.

Its mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

In 1987, it was officially renamed as the United Nations Population Fund but the original abbreviation UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities) was retained.

Headquarters: New York

UNFPA funds assistance, research, and advocacy programs in three major areas:

Reproductive health, including family planning, safe motherhood, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases,

The population problems of developed and developing countries and possible strategies for addressing them.

Issues related to the status of women, including the gender gap in education.

UNFPA assistance programs are undertaken only in response to government requests.

Legionnaire's disease

British government's initiative to put asylum-seekers on a housing barge suffered as Legionella bacteria were found on the barge.

Migrants are removed from the Bibby Stockholm barge after traces of the bacteria causing Legionnaire's disease were found in the onboard water system.



pneumonia — lung inflammation usually caused by infection. It's caused by a bacterium known as legionella.

This bacterium is found in lakes and ponds, but they can also develop in tanks and other water systems.

Transmission: The most common form of transmission of Legionella is inhalation of contaminated aerosols from contaminated water.

Symptoms: The main symptoms are fever, chills, headache, malaise and muscle pain (myalgia).

Treatment: Treatments exist, but there is no vaccine currently available for Legionnaires' disease.