

50 Years of Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

Prelims: Current events of national and international relations | International relations | Environment

Why in news?

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) marked its 50th anniversary in 2025 with commemorative events organized by India in New Delhi.

• **BWC's formal name** - Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction.

Biological weapons are used to disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm or kill humans, animals, or plants. They can be deadly, contagious, and cross-national borders quickly.

- **Negotiated at -** The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Opened for signature on 10 April 1972 & entered into force 26 March 1975.
- Purpose Ensuring that advances in biology and biotechnology are used solely for "peaceful purposes" - and not to trigger artificial epidemics that threaten us all.
- **Supplements** the **1925 Geneva Protocol**, which prohibited only the use of biological weapons, by banning their development, production, and stockpiling.
- **Members** 188 countries are party to the convention, *India signed & ratified in 1974*.
 - 4 Signatory States Egypt, Haiti, Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic.
 - 5 States Israel, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea and Kiribati have <u>neither</u>
 <u>signed nor acceded</u> to the Convention.
- Key highlights -
 - \circ It is the <u>1st multilateral</u> disarmament treaty to <u>ban an entire</u>

category of weapons of mass destruction.

• It effectively *prohibits* the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.

· India's Progress in biotechnology -

- Produces 60% of the world's vaccines
- Supplies over 20% of global generic medicines, including 60% of Africa's generics
- Nearly 11,000 biotech startups present in India up from just 50 in 2014 - making it the world's 3rd largest biotech startup ecosystem;
- Advanced facilities under ICMR and DBT, including BSL-3 and BSL-4 labs, can detect and respond to a wide range of biological threats.

Bioterrorism - The intentional release of biological agents or toxins for the purpose of harming/killing humans, animals/plants with the intent to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives.

References

- 1. The Hindu | Bioterrorism a serious threat EAM S. Jaishankar
- 2. <u>United Nation | Biological Weapons Convention</u>
- 3. <u>United Nation | 50th anniversary of BWC</u>

