

50 Years of Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

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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 **neither signed nor acceded** to the Convention.
- **Key highlights** -
 - It is the **1st multilateral** disarmament treaty to **ban an entire**

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. [United Nation | Biological Weapons Convention](#)
3. [United Nation | 50th anniversary of BWC](#)