Climate Change and Pregnancy Complications Study

***Prelims**: Current events of national and international importance| General issues on Environmental ecology*

Why in news?

A recent report from the US-based research group Climate Central reveals that climate change increases the heat exposure for pregnant women worldwide and leads to health risks.

- The report examined data from 247 countries and territories that focused on measuring increased heat exposure for pregnant women since 2020.

Key Findings of the Study

- A report reveals that climate change has significantly increased exposure to dangerous heat levels during pregnancy.
- **Pregnancy heat-risk days** – In 222 out of 247 countries climate change has ***at least doubled the average annual number*** of "pregnancy heat-risk days" over the past five years.
- **Impact on developing countries** – Developing countries with limited healthcare access showed the largest increases in heat exposure.
- Most affected regions include the Caribbean, Central and South America, Pacific islands, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Implications

- **Public health risk** – Pregnant women are increasingly vulnerable to heat-induced complications, posing a growing maternal and fetal health crisis, especially in under-resourced regions.
- Heat-related pregnancy complications are,
    - Premature birth
    - Stillbirth
    - Birth defects
    - Gestational diabetes
- **Policy urgency** – Beyond tackling climate change at a global level, there is a need for local adaptation strategies, such as:
    - Urban greening
    - Pollution control
    - Creation of cooling zones
    - Public advisories specifically targeting pregnant women
- **Research gaps** – There is a limited understanding of the physiological mechanisms behind heat-related pregnancy risks, underscoring the need for further scientific

studies.

- **Health communication** – Heatwave warnings and health advisories must include pregnant women as a high-risk group, which is currently rarely done.

Reference

[The Hindu| Climate change increasing risk of pregnancy problems]

