Concerns of Hepatitis Virus

Why in news?

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WHO has listed viral hepatitis as a major public health problem throughout the world and particularly in India.

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What is Hepatitis?

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- Hepatitis A virus and hepatitis E virus are responsible for sporadic infections and the epidemics of acute viral hepatitis.
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- Hepatitis B virus and hepatitis C virus predominantly spread through the parental route and are notorious for causing chronic hepatitis.
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- Hepatitis C is caused by a blood-borne virus, which affects the liver, it could spread through the use of injectable drugs, unsafe injection practices and transfusion of unscreened blood.
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- However unlike hepatitis B, it is not sexually transmitted and there is no known vaccine for hepatitis C.
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What is the findings of WHO report?

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- According to WHO Hepatitis is preventable and treatable but remains an acute public health challenge globally and in the Southeast Asia region.
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- Viral hepatitis kills approximately 4 lakh people every year in the Southeast Asia region and is responsible for more deaths than HIV and malaria put together.
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- WHO says these high numbers are unacceptable as there is an effective vaccine and treatment for hepatitis B, and over 90% of the people with hepatitis C can be cured.
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What is the status of Hepatitis in India?

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- Water and blood-borne viral hepatitis is an important public health issue in India.
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- In India viral hepatitis is causing premature death and disease with over 10 million people chronically infected with hepatitis B and C, this is six times the number of HIV/AIDS patients.
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- The fact is that 95% of the people with chronic hepatitis do not know they have been infected and less than 1% have access to treatment.
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What are measures needs to be taken?

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- Union Health Ministry’s National Programme for Control of Viral Hepatitis for 2018-19, with a budget of Rs.600 crore for the next three years, hopes to screen the vulnerable population and provide free treatment where needed.
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- The National Hepatitis Policy will translate into better surveillance and detection of water and blood-borne hepatitis viral infections in various regions.
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- Availability of safe and potable water, early screening, vaccination and prevention of misuse of disposable needles and syringes will help to eliminate treatable viral hepatitis.
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- Easy availability of the newly discovered drugs at a reasonable price will help to make India free of viral hepatitis by 2030
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Source: The Hindu

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