Hearing Problem in India

Why in News?

World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that by 2050, nearly 2.5 billion people worldwide may experience hearing loss, with over 700 million needing rehabilitation.

- **Global status -** The global average indicates that one in 1,000 newborns is born with significant hearing loss, the number is ***twice as high in India.***
- Alarmingly, a significant percentage of those affected are children ***aged 0 to 14 years***.
- WHO warns that the prevalence of hearing loss *increases with age*, among those older than 60 years, over 25% are affected by disabling hearing loss.
- Hearing loss among older adults mirrors the *progression of cataracts*, here, it is sound, not sight that fades away.
- **Status in India -** Around 63 million people, or 6.3% of India's population live with significant auditory impairment.
- A recent study revealed that 5% of students had undiagnosed hearing loss, often thought to be slow learners or as having learning disabilities.
- In Tamil Nadu especially, the burden is ***even higher*** than the Indian average, 6 in every 1,000 newborns affected.
- **Contributing factors -** Congenital infections like rubella, neonatal complications such as low birth weight, and birth injuries.
- Treatable conditions like fluid buildup in the ears due to recurring colds or chronic infections often go unchecked.
- For young adults, hearing loss stems less from birth-related causes and also from lifestyle choices.
- The overuse of headphones, Bluetooth devices, and mobile phones.
- Recreational noise exposure from loud concerts, home theatre systems, and high-volume phone calls further pushes people beyond safe noise levels.

National Programme for Prevention and Control of Deafness (NPPCD), an initiative of the Union Health Ministry, introduced free hearing tests, awareness campaigns, and support for cochlear implants in children.

World Hearing Day

• It is a campaign held each year by Office of Prevention of Blindness and Deafness of the World Health Organization.
• **Hosted on -** March 3.
• **Aim -** To raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care across the world.
• **Theme, 2025 -** "Changing mindsets: empower yourself to make ear and hearing care a reality for all!"

Reference

The Hindu | World Hearing Day

