World Leprosy Day

Why in News?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has requested governments to prioritize leprosy elimination and ensure sustained funding for surveillance, treatment, care and support.

World Leprosy Day

- It is observed annually on the ***last Sunday*** of January since 1954.
- It was established by Raoul Follereau in honor of ***Mahatma Gandhi's*** compassion for leprosy patients.
- **Aim -** To raise public awareness about leprosy.
- **World Leprosy Day, 2025 – Theme** - 'Unite, Act, and Eliminate Leprosy'.

Leprosy

- It is a neglected tropical disease that primarily affects the nervous system.
- It is also known as Hansen's disease.
- It is an infectious disease caused by ***Mycobacterium lapre*** that causes severe, disfiguring skin sores and nerve damage in the arms, legs, and skin areas around the body.
- It's more common in people living in poverty.
- **Symptoms -** Most prominent in cooler parts of the body such as the hands, feet, and face.
- In some cases, body parts may lose their sense of touch and pain, increasing the likelihood of injuries such as cuts and burn.
- **Transmission** - Leprosy is not so contagious, repeated contact with nose and mouth droplets from someone with untreated leprosy can spread.
- **Treatment** - Leprosy is curable with antibiotics, Treatment usually lasts one to two years, and early treatment can prevent disability.
- **Global scenario** - In 2023, 1,82,815 new cases were reported from more than 100 countries, with 95% of those concentrated in 23 global-priority countries.
- Alarmingly, more than 5% of the new cases were reported with Grade 2 Disability (visible deformity), highlighting delays in detection.
- 5.6% of the new cases were among children, with some countries reporting child rates exceeding 30%, indicating ongoing transmission.
- **Jordan** became the 1st country to be verified and acknowledged by the WHO for elimination of leprosy, demonstrating what is possible with focused and concerted efforts
- Additionally, in 2023, 56 countries reported zero new case of leprosy.
- **Scenario in India -** India accounts for 53% of the global leprosy cases.
- As of recent statistics, India has successfully achieved the goal of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem, defined as having less than 1 case per 10,000 people.
- **Global Leprosy Strategy -** The Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030 has a vision of zero disease, zero disability and zero stigma and discrimination.

Reference

The Hindu | Leprosy Elimination



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