Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojna

Why in News

The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** launched the **second phase** of **"Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojna"** for the **underprivileged Thalassemic patients**.

Key Points

- The **Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT)** program was launched in **2017** and is funded by **Coal India Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**. It will be **extended** for next two years from 2020.
    - **HSCT** refers to the **transplantation of stem cells** from various sources (bone marrow, growth factor–stimulated peripheral blood, and umbilical cord blood) for the treatment of various diseases like autoimmune, and genetic diseases.
    - **Hematopoietic Stem Cell:** It is an immature cell that can develop into all types of blood cells, including white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. Hematopoietic stem cells are found in the peripheral blood and the bone marrow. Also called blood stem cell.
- **Objective:** It aims to provide a **one-time cure opportunity for Haemoglobinopathies like Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Disease** for patients who have a matched family donor.
- **Eligibility:** Only patients whose **monthly family income is below Rs 20,000** will be eligible for this assistance.
- The scheme has been extended to cover **Aplastic Anaemia patients** (lack of blood cell production in body).
- **Funding:** The CSR initiative was targeted to provide financial assistance to a total of 200 patients by providing a package cost not exceeding **rupees 10 lakhs per HSCT**.

- **Statistics:** It is estimated 10,000 to 12,000 children are born with thalassemia every year in India.
    - Data on the prevalence of **silent carriers** (persons without symptoms but potential to transmit to offsprings) for various Haemoglobinopathies show that silent carriers are **2.9-4.6% for Thalassemia**, while it can be as high as **40% for sickle cell anaemia** especially among the tribal population.
    - Haemoglobin variants like **Hemoglobin E (HBE)** - deformed hemoglobin- in **eastern India** can be as common as **3-50%** which calls for more attention to these diseases.

Thalassemia

It is a **genetic blood disorder** that causes the body to have less hemoglobin than normal. Hemoglobin enables red blood cells to carry oxygen. Thalassemia can cause anemia, leading to fatigue.

Sickle Cell Disease

- It is an inherited disease caused by defects, called mutations, in the beta globin gene that helps make hemoglobin. The red blood cells become hard and sticky and look like a C-shaped farm tool called a “sickle”. The **sickle cells die early**, which causes a **constant shortage of red blood cells**.
- **World Sickle Cell Day 2020** was observed to increase awareness about the Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) at the national level.

    The day is recognised by the **United Nations** and celebrated every year on **19th June**.

Source: PIB