



## Lymphatic Filariasis

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **Maharashtra government has started a drug administration drive for the elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)** and become the **first State in the country to resume giving rounds of the drug** after the second wave of **Covid-19**.

### Key Points

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- **About:**
  - LF, commonly known as **elephantiasis** and is considered as a **Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)**. It is the **second most disabling disease after mental health**.
  - It **impairs the lymphatic system** and can lead to the **abnormal enlargement of body parts**, causing pain, severe disability and social stigma.
    - The lymphatic system is a network of vessels and specialized tissues that are essential to maintaining the overall fluid balance and health of organs and limbs and, importantly, are a major component of the body's immune defense system.
  - Lymphatic filariasis is a **vector-borne disease**, caused by infection with parasites **classified as nematodes (roundworms)** of the family Filarioidea. There are **3 types** of thread-like filarial worms which causes lymphatic filariasis:
    - ***Wuchereria Bancrofti*** is responsible for 90% of the cases.
    - ***Brugia Malayi*** causes most of the remainder of the cases.
    - ***Brugia Timori*** also causes the disease.

- **Drug Treatment:**
  - The **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommends **three drug treatments** to accelerate the **global elimination of lymphatic filariasis**.
    - The treatment, **known as IDA**, involves a combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole.
    - The plan is to administer these drugs for two consecutive years. The life of the adult worm is hardly four years, so it would die a natural death without causing any harm to the person.
- **Scenario in India:**
  - Lymphatic filariasis poses a grave threat to India. An **estimated 650 million Indians across 21 states and union territories are at risk** of lymphatic filariasis.
  - **Over 40% of worldwide cases** are found in India.
  - The government launched the **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF) in 2018**, and as part of intensifying efforts towards elimination, **later rolled out IDA treatment (triple drug therapy)** in a phased manner.
- **Global Initiatives:**
  - **WHO's New Roadmap for 2021–2030:** To prevent, control, eliminate and eradicate a set of 20 diseases, termed neglected tropical diseases, by 2030.
  - **Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GPELF):**
    - In 2000, WHO established the **GPELF** to stop transmission of infection with **Mass Drug Administration (MDA)** and to alleviate suffering among people affected by the disease through **morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP)**.
    - The **target set by GPELF in 2000 to eliminate LF as a public health problem globally by 2020 was not achieved**. Despite setbacks due to Covid-19, WHO will **accelerate work to achieve this target by 2030**.

Source: TH