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News: World Leprosy Day

- World Leprosy Day is observed every year on the last Sunday of January. In India, it is observed on 30th January every year, coinciding with the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Leprosy

- Leprosy is also known as **Hansen's disease**.
- Leprosy is a **chronic, progressive bacterial infection**.
- It is caused by a **bacterium** called Mycobacterium Leprae, which is an acid-fast rod-shaped bacillus.
- It is a **disease that leaves a terrifying image in its wake of mutilation, rejection, and exclusion** from society.
- It infects **Skin, Peripheral nerves, Upper respiratory tract and Lining of the nose**.
- Leprosy is **transmitted mainly by breathing airborne droplets from the affected individuals**. It can be **contacted at any age**. Leprosy is **curable** with the combination of drugs known as Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT).

- The 1st Phase of the World Bank supported the National Leprosy Elimination Project started from 1993-94. In the year 2001, after the global elimination was achieved, **India was among the 14 countries that missed the target of eliminating leprosy.**
- The National Leprosy Eradication Programme that was launched after this, achieved the goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem, defined as less than 1 case per 10,000 Population, at the National Level in December 2005. In 2017, the SPARSH Leprosy Awareness Campaign was launched to promote awareness and address the issues of stigma and discrimination.
- In commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October 2019, the NLEP has prepared the comprehensive plan to reduce the grade to disability to less than one case per million people by October 2019.