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News: Lymphatic filariasis (LF)

- Recently, the Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare launched the first phase of the Bi-annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign for Lymphatic filariasis (LF) elimination.

Lymphatic Filariasis

- Lymphatic Filariasis is 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**.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- India aims to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027, three years ahead of the global target, through a mission-driven strategy.