



World Leprosy Day

For Prelims: [World Leprosy Day](#), [Leprosy](#), [Mahatma Gandhi](#). National Strategic Plan (NSP) & Roadmap for Leprosy, National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP)

For Mains: Initiatives Related to Health, Leprosy and Associated Social Stigma.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

[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](#)**.

What is the Purpose of World Leprosy Day Observation?

- The theme for **World Leprosy Day 2024 is “Beat Leprosy”**. This theme encapsulates the dual objectives of the day: to eradicate the **stigma associated with [leprosy](#)** and to **promote the dignity of people affected by the disease**.
- The primary objective of the day is to raise awareness among the general public about the stigma associated with leprosy.
- Educating people that leprosy is caused by a **specific bacteria and is easily treatable** forms a crucial part of the awareness campaign.

What is Leprosy?

- **About:**
 - Leprosy, also known as **Hansen’s disease**, is a **chronic infectious disease** caused by a type of bacteria called “***Mycobacterium leprae***”.
 - The disease affects the **skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces** of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes.
 - Leprosy is known to occur at **all ages ranging from early childhood to old age**.
 - Leprosy is **not inherited**, but it is **transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth**, during close and frequent contact with untreated cases.

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LEPROSY

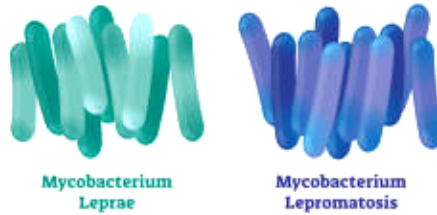


Leprosy Primarily Affects the SKIN and the PERIPHERAL NERVES



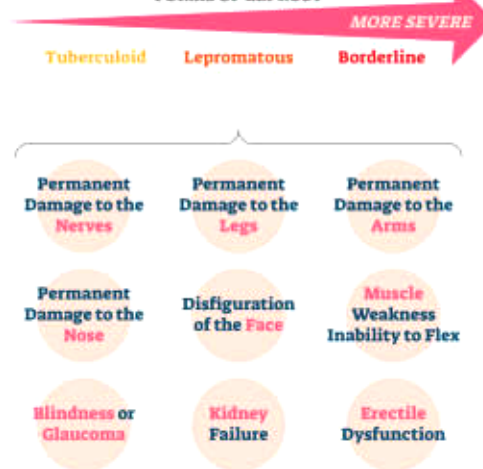
It May also Strike the EYES and the Thin Tissue Lining the Inside of the NOSE, KIDNEYS, and MALE REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS

LEPROSY, Also Known as Hansen's Disease (HD), is a Long-Term Infection by the Bacteria *Mycobacterium Leprae* or *Mycobacterium Lepromatosis*



It Usually Takes About 3 TO 5 YEARS for Symptoms to Appear
Some People do not develop Symptoms UNTIL 20 YEARS LATER

FORMS OF LEPROSY



Classification:

- **Paucibacillary (PB)** and **multibacillary (MB)** are classifications of leprosy.
 - PB leprosy includes all **smear-negative cases (smaller bacterial load)**, while MB leprosy includes all **smear-positive (more infectious compared to smear-negative PTB) cases**.

Treatment:

- **Leprosy is curable** and treatment during early stages can prevent disability.
 - The currently recommended treatment regimen consists of three drugs: **dapsone, rifampicin and clofazimine**. The combination is referred to as multi-drug therapy (MDT).
 - MDT has been made available through the **World Health Organization (WHO)** free of cost to all patients worldwide since 1995.

Global Burden of Leprosy:

- Leprosy is a **neglected tropical disease (NTD)** that still occurs in more than 120 countries, with more than 200,000 new cases reported every year.
- In 2022, **182 countries reported over 1.65 lakh cases** of leprosy, including 174,087 new cases.
- According to the WHO, most countries with high rates of new leprosy cases are in the **WHO African and South-East Asia Regions**.

India and Leprosy:

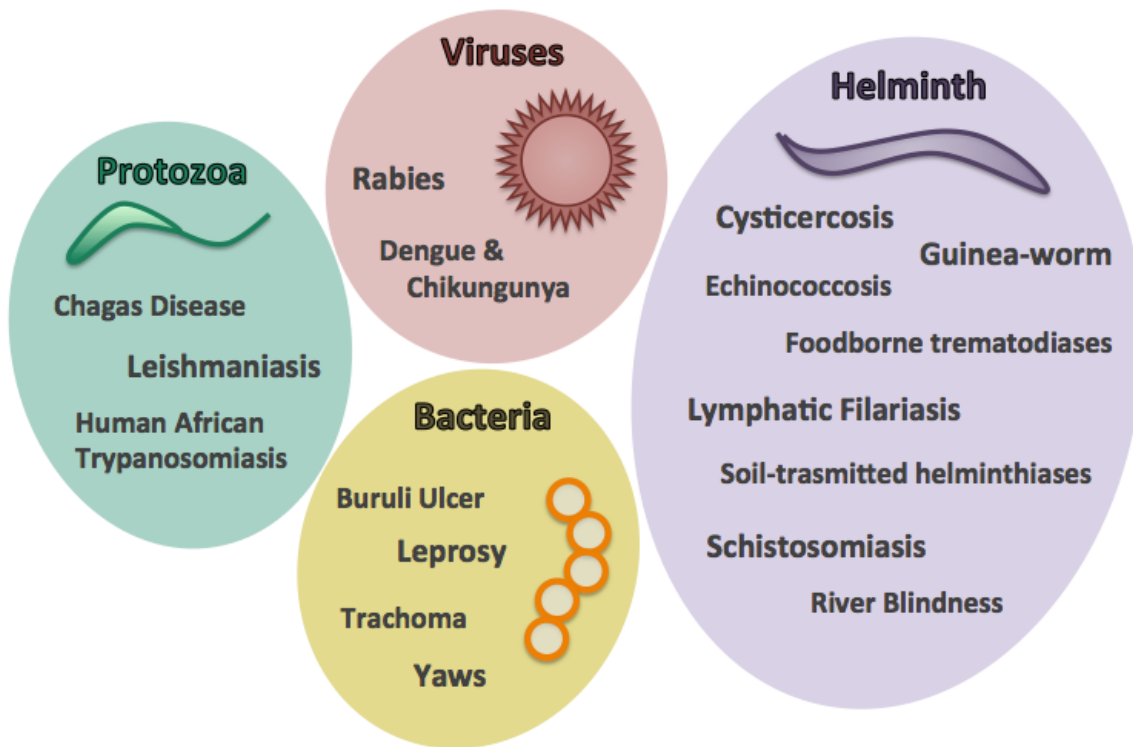
- India has achieved the **elimination of leprosy as a public health problem** as per WHO criteria of less than **1 case per 10,000 population at the National level in 2005**.

- Leprosy is **endemic in several states and union territories of India.**
 - The prevalence rate of leprosy is 0.4 per 10,000 population in the country.
- **Initiatives Taken:**
 - **Global:**
 - **The Global Leprosy Strategy:**
 - In 2016 WHO launched the Global Leprosy Strategy 2016–2020, which aims to reinvigorate efforts to control leprosy and avert disabilities, especially among children still affected by the disease in endemic countries.
 - **Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL):**
 - The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy is a **coalition of individuals and organizations** committed to ending leprosy.
 - **World Leprosy Day.**
 - **India:**
 - **National Strategic Plan (NSP) & Roadmap for Leprosy (2023-27):**
 - It is launched to achieve **zero transmission of leprosy by 2027** i.e. three years before the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 3.3](#).
 - SDG 3.3 is by 2030, to **end the epidemics of [AIDS](#), [tuberculosis](#), [malaria](#) and neglected tropical diseases** and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.
 - **National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP):**
 - The NLEP is a **Centrally Sponsored Health Scheme introduced in 1983** and it has been implemented with the major objective of reducing the **disease burden, prevention of disability and improving awareness** among the masses about Leprosy and its curability.

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

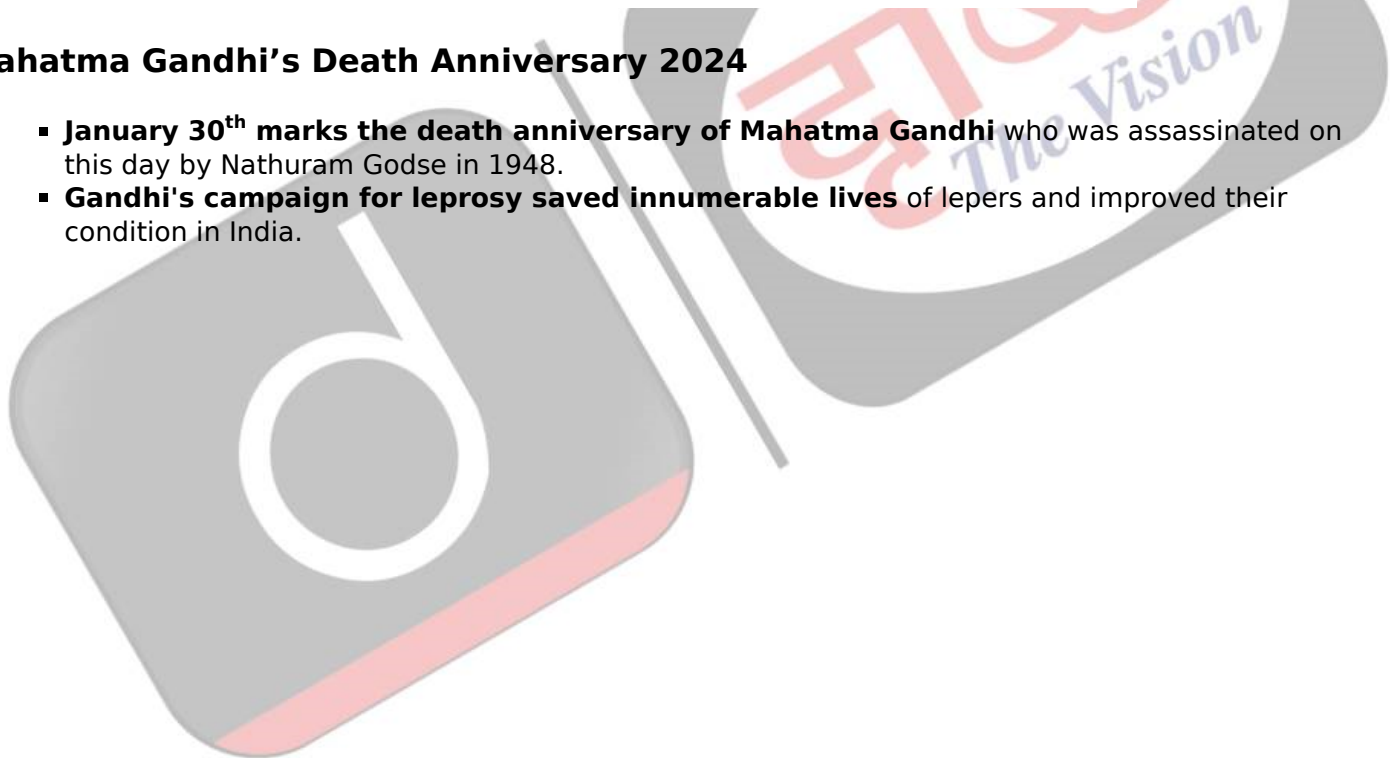
- NTDs are a diverse group of conditions caused by a **variety of pathogens** (including [viruses](#), [bacteria](#), [parasites](#), [fungi](#) and [toxins](#)) and associated with devastating health, social and economic consequences.
 - NTDs are most common among marginalized communities in the developing regions of Africa, Asia and the Americas.
- It is estimated that **NTDs affect more than 1 billion people**, while the number of people requiring NTD interventions (both preventive and curative) is 1.6 billion.
- Few examples of NTDs include: [Buruli ulcer](#); [Chagas disease](#); [dengue chikungunya](#); and [lymphatic filariasis](#).

Neglected Tropical Diseases



Mahatma Gandhi's Death Anniversary 2024

- **January 30th** marks the death anniversary of **Mahatma Gandhi** who was assassinated on this day by Nathuram Godse in 1948.
- **Gandhi's campaign for leprosy saved innumerable lives** of lepers and improved their condition in India.



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

Brief Description

Birth: 2nd October 1869, Porbandar (Gujarat).

2nd October is observed as **International Day of Non-Violence**.

Profile: Lawyer, Politician, Social activist, Writer and led Nationalist Movement.

Father of the Nation (first called by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose).

Ideology: Believed in the ideas of non-violence, Truth, Honesty, Care for Mother Nature, Compassion, Welfare of Downtrodden etc.

Political Mentor: Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Death: Shot dead by Nathuram Godse (30th January, 1948).

30th January is observed as **Martyrs' Day**

Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times.



Gandhi in South Africa (1893-1915)

Used satyagraha against racist regime (Native Africans and Indians were discriminated).

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on 9th January, to commemorate his return from South Africa.

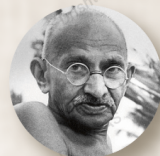
Contribution in India's Freedom Struggle

Small-scale movements like Champaran Satyagraha (1917)—First Civil Disobedience, Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)— First Hunger Strike, and Kheda Satyagraha (1918)—First Non-Cooperation.

Nationwide Mass Movements: Against Rowlatt Act (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement (1942).

Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931): Between Gandhi and Lord Irwin that marked the end of a period of civil disobedience.

Poona Pact (1932): Between Gandhi and **B.R. Ambedkar**; this abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes (Communal Award).



Books Written

Hind Swaraj, My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)

Weeklies

Harijan, Navjivan, Young India, Indian Opinion.

Gandhi Peace Prize

is given by India for social, economic, and political transformation through Gandhian methods.

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”

Read More: [Martyrs' Day](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieving 'Health for All' in India. Explain. (2018)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/world-leprosy-day-2>

