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Current Affairs - 08 August 2025

HEPATITIS D



- It is a **serious liver infection** caused by the **hepatitis D virus (HDV)**.
- It is an **incompetent virus** that **requires hepatitis B virus (HBV) for replication**.
- This means it cannot cause infection alone and triggers co-infections only with the hepatitis B virus.
- Hepatitis D only affects people who already have hepatitis B either simultaneously or sequentially.
- **Hepatitis B & D co-infection runs a more severe** course for risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer. Hepatitis B can cause liver cancer even **without causing cirrhosis** as it gets integrated in the DNA of cells.
- **All types of hepatitis** are associated with acute liver infection; however, only **hepatitis B, C, and D can lead to chronic infections** with a higher risk of liver cirrhosis, failure or cancer.
- Hepatitis D is associated with a two- to six-fold higher risk of liver cancer compared with hepatitis B.
- **Transmission:** The mode of transmission is **similar to hepatitis B and C**, that is through **parenteral route or injections and transfusion, mother to child transmission and sexual contact**.
- **Prevention:** Universal hepatitis B vaccination indirectly prevents hepatitis D.
 - Hepatitis B vaccine may be given in any of the following schedules: **Birth, 1 and 6 months**; birth, 6 and 14 weeks; 6, 10 and 14 weeks; birth, 6, 10 and 14 weeks. In catch up vaccination, use 0, 1 and 6 months schedule.
 - **An adult**, especially if in a high risk comorbidity group, should take the hepatitis B vaccine in **three shots**. The **second dose is given a month after the first**, and the **third dose is given six months after the second**.



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GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION - A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

- Groundwater is the lifeline of India, meeting over 85% of rural drinking water and 65% of irrigation needs.
- Once considered pure, it is now increasingly tainted by nitrates, heavy metals, industrial pollutants, and pathogenic microbes.
- The 2024 **Annual Groundwater Quality Report** by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has revealed alarming contamination levels across the country, underscoring the urgent need for systemic reform.

Scale and Nature of Groundwater Contamination

- Groundwater samples from over 440 districts show dangerous levels of contaminants:
 - **Nitrates:** Found in more than 20% of samples, mainly due to excessive fertiliser use and septic tank leakage.
 - **Fluoride:** Excess levels in over 9% of samples, causing dental and skeletal fluorosis in states like Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.
 - **Arsenic:** Detected at unsafe levels in parts of Punjab, Bihar, and the Gangetic belt, posing severe cancer and neurological risks.
 - **Uranium:** Recorded above 100 ppb in districts of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan, linked to phosphate fertilisers and over-extraction.
 - **Iron and Heavy Metals:** Over 13% of samples exceeded safe iron limits; lead, cadmium, and mercury have been traced to industrial discharges.

Documented Health Impacts

- The health effects of groundwater contamination are severe and widespread:
 - **Fluorosis:** Affecting over 66 million people in 230 districts; leads to joint pain, deformities, and stunted growth in children.
 - **Arsenicosis:** Causes skin lesions, cancers, gangrene, and respiratory illnesses; prevalent in West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh.



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- **Nitrate Poisoning:** Responsible for “blue baby syndrome” in infants; 56% of districts exceed safe nitrate limits.
- **Uranium Toxicity:** Causes chronic organ damage and kidney disorders; children are particularly at risk.
- **Waterborne Diseases:** Outbreaks of cholera, dysentery, and hepatitis due to sewage infiltration into aquifers.

Case Studies of Groundwater “Death Zones”

- **Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh:** 13 deaths in two weeks from kidney failure linked to industrial effluents in borewells.
- **Jalaun, Uttar Pradesh:** Petroleum-like fluids found in handpumps due to suspected underground fuel leaks.
- **Paikarapur, Bhubaneswar:** Hundreds fell ill from sewage-contaminated groundwater due to a faulty treatment plant.

Pathways to Reform

- To safeguard groundwater, a multi-pronged approach is essential:
 - **National Groundwater Pollution Control Framework:** Assign clear responsibilities and empower CGWB with enforcement powers.
 - **Technology-Driven Monitoring:** Real-time sensors, satellite imaging, and public data access.
 - **Health-Centric Interventions:** Community-based defluoridation and arsenic removal units, piped safe water supply.
 - **Zero Liquid Discharge Mandates:** Strict regulation for industrial effluent and landfill leachate.
 - **Agrochemical Management:** Shift towards organic and balanced fertilisation practices.
 - **Citizen Participation:** Empower panchayats, schools, and local monitoring groups to test and report water quality.
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WORLD TRIBAL DAY 2025



- It is observed on **August 9** every year to support and **protect the rights of the world's indigenous people.**
- Also referred to as **World Indigenous Day or International Day of World's Indigenous People**, this day offers an excellent chance to effectively work towards defending the fundamental rights of tribal communities around the world.
- **World Tribal Day 2025 Theme: "Indigenous Peoples and Artificial Intelligence – Defending Rights, Shaping the Future"**
- **History:**
 - The observance of this day originates from a worldwide movement pointed toward recognizing the rights and significant commitments of tribal people.
 - Regardless of comprising around **6% of the worldwide population**, **tribal communities** are often marginalized, despite the fact that they have wealthy cultural diversity.
 - The **origins** of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People **date back to December 1994**, when the **United Nations General Assembly** designated **9 August for this annual observance.**
 - This date holds symbolic significance as it **marks the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.**
 - This meeting took place in **Geneva in 1982.**



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SHELEADS PROGRAMME

- It is a flagship initiative of the UN Women India Country



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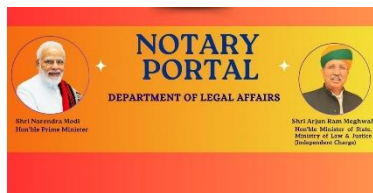
- **Aim:** It is aimed to advance gender equality in public and political leadership, aiming to **support women leaders in contesting the upcoming/next Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections.**
- It is an effort to ensure women have the platform, skills, and networks to step into roles such as shaping policies and governance that reflect the aspirations of all citizens with confidence.
- **Significance:** This initiative is pivotal in **equipping women with the skills and networks** needed to lead from the front, ensuring that the development agenda is truly inclusive and representative of every voice.

Key Facts about UN Women:

- It is the United Nations (UN) entity **dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.**
- It was created in July 2010 **by the UN General Assembly.**
- The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact.
- **The main roles of UN Women are:**
 - To **support inter-governmental bodies**, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards, and norms.
 - To **help member states implement these standards**, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.

NOTARY PORTAL

- It was launched by the **Government of India** as a dedicated platform for providing online services for the works related to the **Notaries Act, 1952 and the Notaries Rules, 1956.**



- **Objectives:** The objective of the Notary Portal is to **provide an online interface between the Notaries appointed**





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by the Central Government and the Government of India for various services like,

- **Submission of applications** for appointment as Notaries,
 - **Verification** of eligibility for appointment as Notaries,
 - Issuance of digitally signed Certificate of Practice as a Notary,
 - Also renewal of Certificate of Practice, change of practice area, submission of annual return etc.
- The Notary Portal **provides a faceless, paperless, transparent and efficient system.**
 - Presently, the module related to verification of documents and eligibility, and issuance of digitally signed Certificate of Practice to the newly appointed Notaries is live.
 - It was **launched in association with NIC** has been designed and developed with different modules which shall be rolled out in phases.

WORLD COURT'S ADVISORY OPINION BOOSTS CLIMATE ACTION

- **Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing existential threats** to humanity, with impacts that transcend national borders and political divides.
- In this context, **the International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, **has delivered a historic advisory opinion clarifying the legal obligations of states** in combating climate change.
- While **advisory opinions are not legally binding, they carry significant moral and political weight**, serving as authoritative interpretations of international law.
- Precedents, such as **the United Kingdom's eventual compliance with the ICJ's opinion on the Chagos Islands**, illustrate their potential to influence state behaviour through global pressure.

Significance of ICJ's Ruling

- **Affirmation of States' Duties to the Climate System**
 - The ICJ's opinion firmly establishes that **states have enforceable legal obligations** to protect the global climate system.



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- It aligns with the positions of other international judicial bodies, such as the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), both of which have recognised states' responsibilities in addressing the climate crisis.
- Crucially, the ICJ emphasised that these duties are not political preferences but binding obligations that no state can ignore.
- **Narrowing Discretion and Strengthening Accountability**
 - States must adopt measures reasonably capable of achieving their stated goals, thereby transforming climate pledges from political statements into legal commitments.
- **Beyond a Self-Contained Regime**
 - The ruling also rejects the argument that climate treaties form a self-contained legal system immune from broader principles of international law.
 - Instead, the ICJ integrated climate obligations with established environmental law doctrines, including the duty of due diligence, the duty to prevent significant harm, and the duty to cooperate.
 - These obligations arise not only from climate-specific treaties but also from the Law of the Sea Convention, customary international law, and human rights instruments.

Conclusion

- The ICJ's advisory opinion represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of international climate law.
 - By grounding climate obligations in binding legal principles, narrowing state discretion, and affirming the interplay between environmental protection and human rights, the court has armed vulnerable nations and climate advocates with new tools for accountability.
 - While it remains to be seen how states will respond, the opinion sends an unambiguous message: climate inaction is not merely a political choice, it is a breach of legal duty.
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KEY FACTS ABOUT CLOUDED LEOPARD



- It is a **wild cat** inhabiting dense forests of the **Himalayas** through mainland Southeast Asia into South China.
- They have a **stocky build** and are **larger than small cat species**, and **smaller than the large cats**.
- There are **two species** of clouded leopards: the **clouded leopard** (*Neofelis nebulosa*), found on the mainland of **southeastern Asia**, and the **Sunda clouded leopard** (*Neofelis diardi*), found on the islands of **Sumatra and Borneo**.
- They are one of the most **ancient cat species**. However, they are neither a true great cat nor a true small cat, because **they cannot roar or purr**.
- **Distribution:**
 - It is found from **Nepal, Bangladesh, and India** through **Indochina** to **Sumatra and Borneo**, and northeastward to **southern China** and formerly **Taiwan**.
 - It has been found at relatively **high altitudes in the Himalayas**.
 - In India, it is found in **Sikkim, northern West Bengal, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh**.
 - It is the **State animal of Meghalaya**.
- **Habitat:**
 - They **prefer** to live in **lowland tropical rainforests**.
 - However, they can **also be found in dry woodlands and secondary forests**, and in Borneo, they are reported to live in **mangrove swamps**.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Both the species are classified as '**Vulnerable**' under the IUCN Red List.



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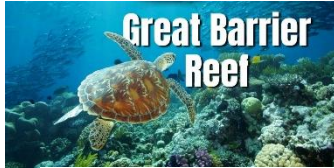
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KEY FACTS ABOUT GREAT BARRIER REEF



- It is a **complex of coral reefs, shoals, and islets** in the **Pacific Ocean** off the **northeastern coast of Australia** in the **Coral Sea**.
 - It is the **longest and largest reef complex** in the world and is the **largest living structure on Earth**.
 - It **extends** in roughly a northwest-southeast direction for more than **2,000 km**, at an offshore distance ranging from 16 to 160 km, and its width ranges from 60 to 250 km.
 - It has an area of some **350,000 sq.km**. It makes up about **10 percent of the world's coral reef ecosystems**.
 - The reef, which is **large enough to be visible from space**, actually consists of some **2,100 individual reefs** and some **800 fringing reefs** (formed around islands or bordering coastlines).
 - It contains **400 types of coral**, 1,500 species of fishes, and 4,000 types of mollusks species.
 - The reef is also **home to six of the seven known species of sea turtles**, more than a dozen sea snakes, and nearly two dozen species of birds.
 - It also holds great scientific interest as the **habitat of species such as the dugong** ('sea cow') and the large green turtle, which are threatened with extinction.
 - Much of the Great Barrier Reef is a **marine protected area, managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority of Australia**.
 - UNESCO declared the Great Barrier Reef a **World Heritage Site** in 1981.
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