Heatwaves

- Heatwaves, or **heat and hot weather** that can last for several days, can have a significant impact on society, including a rise in heat-related deaths.
- The India Meteorological Department requires that temperatures increase 5–6 °C (9–10.8 °F) or more above the normal temperature to be called a heatwave.
- Heatwaves are among **the most dangerous of natural hazards**, but rarely receive adequate attention because their death tolls and destruction are not always immediately obvious.
- Population exposure to heat is increasing due to **climate change**.
- Globally, **extreme temperature events** are observed to be increasing in their **frequency, duration, and magnitude**.
- Exposure to heat causes **severe symptoms**, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke – a condition which causes faintness, as well as dry, warm skin, due to the inability of the body to control high temperatures.
- Other symptoms include **swelling in the lower limbs, heat rash on the neck, cramps, headache, irritability, lethargy and weakness**.
- Heat can cause severe dehydration, acute cerebrovascular accidents and contribute to **thrombogenesis (blood clots)**.
- While the effects of heat may be exacerbated in cities, due to the **urban heat island (UHI)** effect, the livelihoods and wellbeing of **non-urban communities** can also be severely disrupted during and after periods of unusually hot weather.
- Heatwaves can burden **health and emergency services** and also increase **strain on water**, energy and transportation resulting in **power shortages** or even blackouts.
- Food and livelihood security may also be strained if people lose their crops or livestock due to extreme heat.

Data

- Between 2000 and 2016, the number of people exposed to heatwaves increased by around 125 million.
- From **1998-2017**, more than 166 000 people died due to heatwaves, including more than 70 000 who died during the 2003 heatwave in Europe.