News: National Symposium on Lymphatic Filariasis was held in India on the theme ‘United to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis’.

Prelims and Mains focus: about lymphatic filarisis, symptoms and its effects, Triple drug therapy, global concern

About Lymphatic filariasis:

- Also called as elephantiasis, it is caused by infection with parasitic worms living in the lymphatic system. The larval stages of the parasite (microfilaria) circulate in the blood and are transmitted from person to person by mosquitoes.

- May Cause abnormal enlargement of body parts, and leading to severe disability and social stigmatization of those affected

- The parasites are transmitted by four main types of mosquitoes: Culex, Mansonia, Anopheles and Aedes.

Triple drug therapy:

The World Health Organization (WHO) is recommending three drug treatment 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.

Need for and significance of the therapy:

- Lymphatic filariasis poses a grave threat to India.
- Over 40% of worldwide cases are found in India.
- Since 2004, two drug therapy for lymphatic filariasis has been in place but the addition of the third drug now will give a boost to the overall campaign.
- India has missed earlier deadlines to eradicate the disease by 2015 and 2017.
The global deadline now is 2020 and the three drug approach may help the country get there.

Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis:

It is an alliance of partners from 72 LF endemic national country programmes, NGOs, private sectors, academic and research institutes and international development agencies that assists WHO’s Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.