

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## MALDIVES ENDS PACT WITH INDIA ON HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY

### In Context

- The Maldives government has decided to **not renew an agreement with India** that allowed India to conduct **hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters**.

### About

- The agreement was signed in **2019** when President Ibrahim Solih was in power.
- The new government of President Mohamed Muizzu recently requested that India should pull out its military personnel deployed in the country.

### Hydrographic Survey Pact

- Hydrographic surveys** are carried out by ships, which use methods such as sonar to understand the various features of a water body.
  - These surveys help map out water depth, the shape of the seafloor and coastline, the location of possible obstructions, and physical features of water bodies, to ensure the efficiency and safety of maritime transportation.
- So far, three joint hydrographic surveys have been undertaken – **in 2021, 2022, and 2023**.
  - The surveys were done to generate updated Navigational Charts/ Electronic Navigational Charts of the areas, which would help sectors such as Tourism, Fisheries, Agriculture, etc.
- The survey is in line with **India's policy of supporting the Maldives** to set up Hydrographic facilities within the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF).

### India's other Such Surveys

- India's oldest Hydrographic Survey ship, INS Sandhayak undertook more than 200 major hydrographic surveys along the Western and Eastern coasts of the Indian peninsula, and the Andaman Sea, as well as surveys in neighbouring countries including **Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh**.
- Indian survey ships have assisted Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Maldives, Oman, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania in the past.

### Reasons for Not Renewing the Agreement

- Change of Regime:** It has to do with the change of regime in the country as the previous President Solih was seen as being more favourable to India, but his successor Mohamed Muizzu is being seen as more pro-China.
- Influence of China:** While the Maldives has traditionally been a part of India's sphere of influence, in recent decades China has sought to project its power aggressively in the Indian Ocean, including through massive investments in infrastructure projects under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- Change in Foreign Policy:** During the election campaign, Muizzu said agreements with foreign countries must be terminated unless their presence was beneficial to the Maldives which was seen as a reference to India.

### Brief on India and Maldives Relations

- Early Diplomatic Ties (1965-1978):** The Maldives gained independence from the British in **1965**, and established diplomatic relations with India.
  - India was one of the first countries to recognize the Maldives as an independent nation.
- Strategic Importance:** The Maldives is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, and its stability and security are of interest to India.
- Economic Cooperation:** India and Maldives signed a **trade agreement in 1981**, which provides for the export of essential commodities.
  - India-Maldives bilateral trade crossed the USD 300 million mark for the first time in 2021.
  - India emerged as Maldives' 3rd largest trade partner in 2021.
- Defense and Security Cooperation: Since 1988**, defence and security has been a major area of cooperation between India and Maldives.
  - A **comprehensive Action Plan for Defence** was also signed in **2016** to consolidate defence partnership.
- Capacity Building/Training:** India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around **70%** of their defence training requirements.
- Tourism:** In 2023, India is the leading source market for Maldives with a **11.8% market share**.

- ◆ In March 2022, India & Maldives agreed for an open skies arrangement which will further improve connectivity between two countries.

### Conclusion

- Like any relationship, India-Maldives ties have faced challenges, including political changes within the Maldives.
- However, the countries have demonstrated resilience and an ability to navigate through such challenges.

Source: *IE*

## INDIA'S GREEN ENERGY PUSH

### In News

- Fossil fuel phase-out was the most hotly contested issue at the **2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP28**, which ended with an agreement to “transition away from fossil fuels”, but without a mention of their “phase-out”.

### More In News

- Some countries including India and China have not explicitly endorsed a fossil fuel phase-out at COP28, but have backed a popular call for boosting renewable energy.
  - ◆ India has also made it clear that cuts must be on all fossil fuel, not just Coal.

### About India's Green energy push

- India's journey towards a greener future has gained global recognition and it has transitioned from a power deficit to a power surplus nation.
- The **remarkable growth of solar and wind energy capacity** has cemented India's position as a global leader in renewable energy adoption.
- India is now the **world's third largest producer of renewable energy**.
- More than 40 per cent of installed electricity capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources, including large hydro, having risen sharply from just around 25 percent in 2013.
  - ◆ Solar and wind capacity is now more than 30 per cent.

### Targets

- India, at the 26th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) in November, 2021, announced its target to achieve net zero by 2070 in addition to attaining the short-term targets which include:

- ◆ Increasing renewables capacity to 500 GW by 2030,
- ◆ Meeting 50% of energy requirements from renewables,
- ◆ Reducing cumulative emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030, and
- ◆ Reducing emissions intensity of India's gross domestic product (GDP) by 45% by 2030.

### Initiatives

- the Government of India has initiated major reforms with missions like the **Green Hydrogen Mission, renewable energy evaluation storage projects, the Green Credit programme, PM- PRANAM, Gobardhan scheme, MISHTI, Amrit Dharohar initiative, coastal shipping replacement, vehicle scrapping policy for cities, PM-KUSUM Yojana, etc.**
- **Up to 100% FDI is allowed under the automatic route for renewable energy generation**

### Issues and challenges

- India is the **world's second largest coal producer**. The stipulation moved at the Dubai COP28 meeting that **no new coal-fired power plants can be commissioned** without an in-built carbon capture and storage facility, would have effectively put **India's fresh coal-based capacity in jeopardy**, given the added cost implications
- Fossil fuels cannot simply be phased out since alternative solutions are not in place yet.
- The green push has resulted in a **24 per cent reduction in emission intensity of GDP** (ratio of total greenhouse gas emissions and gross domestic product — between **2005 and 2016**, it has led to a situation in which the grid is increasingly powered by renewables, which creates the problem of **intermittency**.
- The other issue is that renewable energy is not available round-the-clock and battery storage is still not economical.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

- India already has ambitious targets on renewable and a thriving energy efficiency programme spanning sectors.
  - ◆ India is a global renewables leader and its support will provide a boost for the global renewables sector



- The undeniable importance of renewable energy must be balanced with a proactive approach to address future environmental challenges associated with these sources.
- The government must ensure that solar PV panel manufacturing companies incorporate safe waste disposal practices into their operations, securing a greener and more sustainable future for India.

#### Do you know ?

- According to India's latest communications to the United Nations, its greenhouse gas emissions increased 4% from 2016-2019 to 2.6 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- The energy sector contributed the most to the overall anthropogenic emissions (75.81%), followed by the agriculture sector (13.44%), Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU) sector (8.41%), and Waste (2.34%).

Source: *IE*

## ENNORE OIL SPILL

### Context

- In Ennore, Tamil Nadu Kosasthalaiyar river has witnessed oil spill from the Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited post Cyclone Michaung.

### What is an Oil Spill?

- **An oil spill** is the release of a liquid petroleum hydrocarbon from tankers, offshore platforms, drilling rigs or wells into the environment, especially marine areas.
- **Spilled substances:** It may be refined petroleum products, such as gasoline and diesel fuel, as well as their by-products — heavier fuels used by large ships such as bunker fuel or oily refuse of any kind.

### Past incidences

- **International Incidence:**
  - ♦ **Venezuela:** In 2020 oil leakage from the El Palito refinery in Venezuela.
  - ♦ **Japanese ship** MV Wakashio carrying fuel oil split into two parts near Blue Bay Marine Park in south-east Mauritius.
  - ♦ **Russia:** Arctic (Norilsk diesel fuel spill) Oil Spill

### Indian incidents:

- ♦ **Chennai 2017:** Two ships collided off Kamarajar Port Limited's (KPL) harbor and resulted in a major oil spill disaster.
- ♦ **Sundarban 2014:** Oil spill in Sela River, Bangladesh created an environmental concern for India too.
- ♦ **ONGC Uran Plan leaked** oil in the Arabian Sea in 2013.
- ♦ **Mumbai coast:** In 2010 two ships collided causing the 800 tonnes of the oil spill.

### Damage caused by oil spill

- **Environmental Impact:** Oil spills harm various species of fish, birds, mammals, and other marine life. The oil can coat and damage the fur or feathers of animals, making it difficult for them to swim or fly.
- **Habitat Destruction:** Oil can contaminate coastal habitats, including beaches, marshes, and mangroves, leading to long-term damage.
- **Fisheries and Aquaculture:** Contaminated waters can lead to reduced fish populations and damage to fishing gear, affecting the livelihoods of communities dependent on these activities.
  - ♦ In the case of Ennore, fishermen have not been able to venture into fishing as fish catch smells of oil.
- **Tourism:** Coastal areas affected by oil spills often experience a decline in tourism due to the negative perception of polluted beaches and waters. This can result in economic losses for local businesses and communities.
- **Exposure to Toxic Substances:** The chemicals present in oil, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), pose health risks to humans. Inhalation of fumes, ingestion of contaminated seafood, or direct skin contact with oil can lead to respiratory problems, skin irritation, and long-term health effects.

### International Efforts for dealing with Oil Spill

- **International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL):** It was rolled out by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 1973 and recognised the need for international coherent efforts for curbing oil spill.
- **International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation**

**1990:** It is the international instrument that provides a framework designed to facilitate international cooperation and mutual assistance in preparing for and responding to major oil pollution incidents.

### Indian Efforts for dealing with Oil Spill

- **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP):** It was promulgated in 1996 and revised in 2015. Its Objectives are:
  - ♦ Effective reporting of spillage
  - ♦ Prompt response to prevent, control and combat oil pollution
  - ♦ Adequate protection to Public Health and Welfare along with Marine Environment
  - ♦ Use of Science and Technology for preventing and managing oil spills and pollution and residuals.
- **Merchant shipping Act, 1958:** The Act, describes the power to give a notice to the owner, when the central government is satisfied the ship is not as per the prescribed rules. After notice, if the person fails to comply, the government can convict the person of an offense.
- **The Indian Coast Guard:** It functions as the Central Coordinating Authority for response to Oil spills in Indian waters.
  - ♦ **The National Level Pollution Response Exercise (NATPOLREX-IX)** was conducted by the Indian Coast Guard off Vadinar, Gujarat recently.

### Control measures for Oil Spills

- **Bioremediation:** It refers to the use of specific microorganisms to remove any toxic or harmful substances
  - ♦ TERI has developed **Oil Zapper Bacteria** which can degrade the oil quickly.
- **Oil Booms:** They are temporary floating barriers used to contain marine spills, protect the environment, and assist in recovery.
- **Using Dispersants:** Dispersal agents are chemicals that are sprayed upon the spill with the help of aircraft and boats, which aid the natural breakdown of oil components

### Way ahead

- **Preventive measures** by the central coordinating agency, ship owners, oil handling facilities and other concerned stakeholders are required to

prepare for combating marine spill.

- Also regular maintenance of industrial equipment and following the standard operation and safety procedure will lead to the most desired result of avoiding such disasters.

### Kosasthalaiyar River

- The river originates near Pallipattu in Thiruvallur district in **Tamil Nadu** and drains into the **Bay of Bengal**.
- It is a **136-kilometer** long river flowing in the Chennai metropolitan area.

Source: *TH*

## E-CIGARETTES

### Context

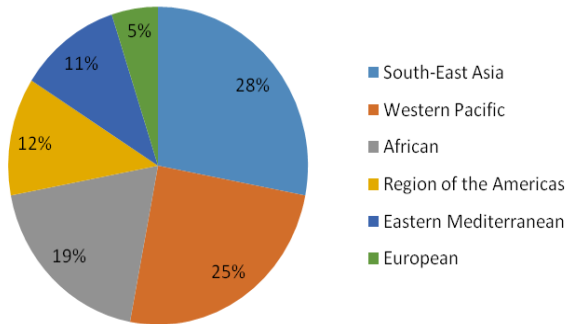
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) said that **e-cigarettes are not effective for quitting tobacco** at the population level, and there is an urgent need to control to minimise health harms to the population.

### About e-cigarettes

- E-cigarettes, also known as **Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)**, and sometimes **Electronic Non-nicotine Delivery Systems (ENNDS)**.
- They produce an aerosol by heating a **liquid (e-liquids)** that usually contains nicotine—the addictive drug.
- These are known by many different names. They are sometimes called **‘e-cigs’, ‘e-hookahs’, ‘mods’, ‘vape pens’, ‘vapes’, ‘tank systems’, and ‘electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)’**.
  - Using an e-cigarette is sometimes called **‘vaping’**.



### WHO Regions and Road Accidents



### Are e-cigarettes less harmful than regular cigarettes?

- Both tobacco products and ENDS pose risks to health.
- E-cigarette aerosol generally contains fewer toxic chemicals than the deadly mix of more than 7,000 chemicals in smoke from regular cigarettes.

### Regulations and Monitoring

- WHO regularly monitors and reviews the evidence on ENDS and health and offers guidance to governments.
- The **WHO** has added that e-cigarettes have been allowed on the open market and aggressively marketed to young people.
  - ♦ 34 countries have banned the sale of e-cigarettes;
  - ♦ 88 countries have no minimum age at which e-cigarettes can be bought;
  - ♦ 74 countries have no regulations in place for e-cigarettes.
- It releases the **biennial WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic**, which tracks the status of the tobacco epidemic and interventions to combat it and other relevant resources.
- **In India:** The possession of e-cigarettes and similar devices is a violation of the **Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA) 2019**.

Source: **TH**

## GPAI'S NEW DELHI DECLARATION ON AI

### Context

- The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit, chaired by India, announced the adoption of the **New Delhi Declaration** at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

### About

- The **New Delhi Declaration on AI** agreed to collaboratively develop AI applications in **healthcare and agriculture**, as well as including the **needs of the Global South** in development of AI.
- India pitched to host a **GPAA Global Governance Summit** to finalise the proposed framework, in next six months.
- Setting up a third '**expert support centre**' for AI by Japan (other two centres in Canada and France) aims to unveil its official AI policy under the **India AI Program**.
- Global discussions on the development of AI regulations will further take place at the **Korea Safety Summit in mid-2024**.

### Major Outcomes

- GPAI New Delhi Declaration built the consensus among GPAI members on advancing safe, secure, and trustworthy AI and commitment to supporting the sustainability of GPAI projects.
- It agreed upon using the GPAI platform to create **a global framework on AI trust and safety**, and make AI solutions and benefits available for all.
- **India Shines as Global Hub for AI Innovation.**
  - ♦ It highlighted India as the main player in the field of AI talent and AI-related ideas.
- India brought together all major initiatives for AI– **UN Advisory Group on AI, UK AI Safety Summit** – at one event at GPAI New Delhi Summit.
- **AI Research Analytics and Knowledge Dissemination Platform (AIRAWAT)** and **National Program on Artificial Intelligence** and its role in shaping AI ecosystem in India was prominently emphasised.
- **Gamechanger Awards:** The winners of **AI Game Changers Awards and Youth for Unnati & Vikas with AI Awards (YUVAi)**, organised by Intel in partnership with NeGD, were felicitated during the Summit.

### Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)

- It is a **multi-stakeholder initiative** of global experts bridging AI theory and practice, promoting research and practical efforts across science, industry, civil society, and governments.
- It was established in June 2020 **with 15 member countries** and **currently it has 29 member states** (*Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union*).
- It has a **Council, Steering Committee and an Executive Council** supported by a Secretariat hosted by the OECD.
- It has two **Centres of Expertise**:
  - ♦ **Montreal**: The International Centre of Expertise in Montreal for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (ICEMAI);
  - ♦ **Paris**: The French National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology (INRIA)

### Working Themes of GPAI

Responsible AI	Data Governance	Future of Work	Innovation and Commercialization
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### India in GPAI

- **India as the founding member of GPAI**, Incoming Lead Chair for 2022-2023, Lead Chair for 2023-2024 and Outgoing Lead Chair for 2024-2025 would be required to ***partake in strategic and administrative responsibilities on behalf of GPAI***.
  - ♦ It includes responsibilities as part of the **GPAI Troika, Ministerial Council, Steering Committee, and Executive Council**.
- India is catalysing AI innovation in alignment with the **OECD principles on AI** through its various programs and policy grounded in the principle of Responsible AI for All.

### Principles for responsible and trustworthy AI

Inclusive growth, sustainable development and well-being	Human-centred values and fairness	Robustness, security and safety	Accountability	Investing in AI research and development	Shaping an enabling policy environment for AI	International cooperation for trustworthy AI	Building human capacity and preparing for labour market transformation	Fostering a digital ecosystem for AI	National policies and international cooperation for trustworthy AI	Transparency and explainability
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For more details about **AI and its applications/potential benefits and challenges**, please refer to the article: [AI's Potential and Threat Call](#)

**Source:** *Live Mint*

## NEWS IN SHORTS

### CHANNAPATNA TOYS

#### In News

- Toys made in Channapatna now become part of children's academic activities in Afghanistan.

#### About Channapatna Toys

- In the native language **Channapatna** is also called as "**Gombegala Ooru**" meaning **toys town in English**.
  - ♦ Channapatna taluk comes under Ramanagara District. Its headquarters is located in Bengalur-Mysuru highwa
- The history of **Channapatna** toys can be traced back to the time of **Tipu Sultan**, who encouraged the Persians to come down to India and teach the artisans the art.

**Bavas Miyan is known as the Father of Channapatna Toys** for his commitment to helping the local artisans and bringing in new technologies to improve the craft.



- Channapatna Toys has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- **Features** : The toys are made mainly from Dhoodi Wood or Milkwood, as it is easy to carve out the shapes. However, craftsmen now use other types of hardwood like rubberwood, sycamore, silver wood and red cedar.
  - ♦ Channapatna crafts park is India's first craft park and located at Channapatna in Karnataka, South India.

Source: **TH**

### TAX INSPECTORS WITHOUT BORDERS (TIWB)

#### Context

- Saint Lucia's Tax Inspectors without Borders (TIWB) programme launched in partnership with India.

#### About

- Under the programme India aims to aid Saint Lucia in **strengthening its tax administration** by transferring technical knowledge and skills to its tax administration, and through sharing of best practices.
- The focus of the programme will be on effective use of automatic exchange of information under the **Common Reporting Standard (CRS) framework**.

#### Tax Inspectors without Borders (TIWB)

- TIWB is a joint initiative of the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**.
- **Modus Operandi:** It deploys qualified experts in developing countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. They train the local countries' personnel in fields of;
  - ♦ Tax capacity and audits,
  - ♦ Criminal tax investigations and
  - ♦ The effective use of automatically exchanged information.

#### Saint Lucia

- **Saint Lucia** is an island country of the **West Indies** in the **eastern Caribbean**.
- The island is of **volcanic origin** and is bisected from north to south by a central ridge of wooded mountains, the highest point being **Mount Gimie**.
- Saint Lucia is a **member of the Commonwealth**.
- **Capital:** Castries

Source: **PIB**



## NATIONAL COMPANY LAW APPELLATE TRIBUNAL (NCLAT)

### In News

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has refused to stay the proposed merger between Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) and Sony

### About NCLAT

- It was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June, 2016.
- **Power and Jurisdiction:** NCLAT is the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), with effect from 1st December, 2016.
  - ♦ NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.**
  - ♦ NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**
  - ♦ NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against the orders of the **National Financial Reporting Authority** – as per the amendment brought to Section 410 (a) of the Companies Act, 2013.

Source: **TH**

## MLA LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT (MLALAD) FUNDS

### Context

- The Member of Legislative Assembly Local Area Development Scheme (MLALAD) funds for Delhi legislators raised from Rs 4 crore to Rs 7 crore.

### About MLA LAD funds

- MLALAD funds are **allotted to legislators** to carry out development projects in their constituencies, **on the lines of ‘Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) Fund’.**

### Process:

- Each MLA has the choice to suggest to the Deputy Commissioner of his/her district, to the extent of allocations given from year to year, to be taken up by his/her constituency.
- The amount provided under **MLALAD Scheme** is released in the form of Grant-in-aid for utilisation by the districts or local authorities.
- The unspent amount from the MLALAD fund **does not lapse** and is allocated to the MLA in the next financial year.

### Features of the funds:

- The type of work under this scheme should be developmental in nature based on locally felt.
  - ♦ The work can be completed within **one financial year** and lead to the creation of **durable assets.**
  - ♦ It is applicable for both rural and urban areas.
- The developmental works such as repairing of roads, parks, street furniture, security arrangements like providing gates for residential areas and other local works.

Source: **TH**

## VISA-FREE TRAVEL FOR INDIAN CITIZENS IN IRAN

### In Context

- **Iran** has announced that it was lifting **visa requirements for citizens of India** as well as **32 other countries.**

### About

- The move is aimed at **boosting tourism** with more visitors from across the world.
- At present, **27 countries** provide visa-free entry to the citizens of India.
  - ♦ The latest additions include Kenya, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka.
  - ♦ Other countries that allow entry to Indian citizens without a visa include Barbados, Bhutan, Dominica, Haiti, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Samoa, and Trinidad and Tobago, among others.
- According to data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, the **top five destinations** for Indian citizens are the **UAE, the USA, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Thailand;** with a large number comprising diaspora tourists.

Source: *IE*

## HEMOPHILIA

### In Context

- The **Haemophilia and Health Collective of North (HHCN)** has recommended the **use of prophylaxis** as the standard of care in haemophilia patients to prevent them from bleeding.
  - ♦ HHCN is a **registered body of India's leading healthcare professionals** working in the domain of haemophilia care for over two decades.

### About Haemophilia

- It is a **rare genetic disorder** that **impairs the body's ability** to control blood clotting or coagulation.
- People with hemophilia experience **prolonged bleeding**, even from minor injuries.
- India has the **second-largest population of haemophilia patients** in the world.
- The two main types of hemophilia are **hemophilia A and hemophilia B**, and they differ based on

the deficient clotting factor.

- ♦ **Hemophilia A:** Hemophilia A is the more common form and is caused by a deficiency of clotting factor VIII.
- ♦ **Hemophilia B:** Hemophilia B is less common and is caused by a deficiency of clotting factor IX.
- **Inheritance:** Hemophilia is usually inherited in an **X-linked recessive pattern**. This means that the gene mutation causing hemophilia is located on the X chromosome.
  - ♦ Since males have one X and one Y chromosome, a mutation on the X chromosome they inherit from their mother will result in hemophilia. Females, with two X chromosomes, are typically carriers.
- **Treatment:** preventative treatment, where medicine is used to prevent bleeding and subsequent joint and muscle damage,
  - ♦ on-demand treatment, where medicine is used to treat prolonged bleeding.

Source: *BS*

