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PARADIGM SHIFT TO COUNTER RISING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN INDIA

Context

- The **Economic Survey 2023-24** flagged a rise in mental health issues among Indians, calling for a paradigm shift towards a bottom-up approach to address the problem.

Status of Mental health related issues in India

- According to the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015-16 data, **10.6% of adults suffered from mental disorders in India** while the treatment gap for mental disorders ranged between 70-92% for various disorders.
- The prevalence of **mental morbidity was higher in urban metro regions (13.5%)** as compared to rural areas (6.9%) and urban non-metro areas (4.3%).
- Individuals aged **25-44 years are the most affected** by mental illnesses,
- According to the **NCERT's Mental Health and Well-being of School Students Survey**, there is an increasing prevalence of poor mental health among adolescents, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 11% of students reported as feeling anxious, 14% as feeling extreme emotion and 43% experienced mood swings.

Causes of Mental Illness

- Exposure to unfavorable social, economic, geopolitical and environmental circumstances** including poverty, violence, inequality and environmental deprivation increases people's risk of experiencing mental health conditions.
- The pandemic-led lockdowns and the uncertainties associated** with them have had a detrimental effect on mental well-being.
- Overuse of the internet:** Unrestrained and unsupervised use of the internet by children can culminate in a range of problems, from the more prevalent obsessive consumption of social media or 'doom scrolling' to severe ones such as cyberbullying.
- Early adverse life experiences, such as **trauma or a history of abuse** (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)

- Use of **alcohol or drugs, having feelings of loneliness or isolation**, etc.

Concerns

- Mental health problems **affect the quality of life** of an individual and constrain the realization of an individual's potential.
- At an aggregate economic level, mental health disorders are associated with significant productivity losses due to **absenteeism, decreased productivity, disability**, and **increased healthcare costs**.
- Also the lack of awareness about mental health and the stigma surrounding it render any programme unfeasible.

Government of India Initiatives

- National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982:** To ensure the availability and accessibility of **minimum mental healthcare** for all in the foreseeable future.
- Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** The act **decriminalised suicide attempts** in India and also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
 - The most significant provision in the act was "**advanced directives**", which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to decide the course of their treatment.
 - It also **restricted the use of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)**, and banned its use on minors, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017:** The Act acknowledges mental illness as a disability and seeks to enhance the Rights and Entitlements of the Disabled.
- Manodarpan Initiative:** An initiative under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, aims to **provide psycho-social support to students** for their mental health and well-being.
- Kiran Helpline:** The helpline is a **step towards suicide prevention**, and can help with support and crisis management.

Way Ahead

- The **Economic survey suggested** that effective pathways for **integrating mental health interventions in schools** can include developing an age-appropriate mental health curriculum for teachers and students, encouraging early

intervention and positive language in schools, promoting community-level interactions, and balancing the role of technology.

- **Need to increase psychiatrists' numbers:** Doubling the efforts to increase the number of psychiatrists, from 0.75 psychiatrists per lakh population in 2021 to the WHO norm of 3 psychiatrists per lakh population.
- The report stressed on **developing comprehensive guidelines for the excellence centers' services** alongside mental healthcare professionals.
- Also there is a need for **nurturing peer support networks, self-help groups, and community-based rehabilitation programmes** to destigmatize mental disorders and develop a sense of belongingness in their victims.
- **Making mental health an integral part of the public health programme:** to help screen and identify high-risk groups and strengthen mental health interventions like counseling services.

Source: TH

INSOLVENCY & BANKRUPTCY CODE (IBC) IN INDIA

Context

- The Finance Minister has proposed to set up an **integrated technology platform** to improve the outcomes under the **Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**.

About

- The Union Minister also proposed the **establishment of additional tribunals** out of which, some will be notified to decide cases exclusively under the Companies Act.
- It is also proposed that steps for **reforming and strengthening debt recovery tribunals** be taken and additional tribunals be established to speed up the recovery.

Insolvency

- In a growing economy like India, a **healthy credit flow and generation of new capital are essential**.
- When a company or business turns **insolvent or "sick"**, it begins to **default on its loans**.
 - ♦ In order for credit to not get stuck in the system or turn into bad loans, it is important

that **banks or creditors are able to recover** as much as possible from the defaulter and as quickly as they can.

- The business can either get a chance, if still viable, to start afresh with new owners, or its **assets can be liquidated or sold off in a timely manner**.
- This way **fresh credit can be pumped into the system** and the value degeneration of assets can be minimised.

Need for the IBC

- In 2016, **India's Non-Performing Assets and debt defaults** were piling up, and **older loan recovery mechanisms** such as the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act (SARFAESI), Lok Adalats, and Debt Recovery Tribunals were seen to be performing badly, the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) code was introduced**.
 - ♦ It was introduced to **overhaul the corporate distress resolution regime** in and **consolidate previously available laws to create a time-bound mechanism**.
 - When insolvency is triggered under the IBC, there can be **two outcomes: resolution or liquidation**; all attempts are made to resolve the insolvency by either coming up with a restructuring or new ownership plan and if resolution attempts fail, the company's assets are liquidated.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- **Objective:** The primary objective of the IBC is to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit, and balance the interests of all stakeholders by providing for a time-bound process to resolve insolvency.
- **Applicability:** The IBC applies to companies, limited liability partnerships (LLPs), partnership firms, and individuals. It provides a framework for both corporate and personal insolvency.
- **Modus Operandi:** When a corporate debtor (CD), or a company **defaults on its loan repayment**, either the creditor or the debtor **can apply for the initiation of a Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)** under Section 6 of the IBC.
 - ♦ The minimum amount of default is **₹1 crore**.
 - ♦ To apply for insolvency, one has to approach a **stipulated adjudicating authority (AA)** under the IBC— the various benches of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) across India are the designated AAs.

- **Insolvency Resolution Process (IRP):** The IBC provides for a structured insolvency resolution process overseen by licensed insolvency professionals (IPs).
- **Adjudicating Authority:** The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is the adjudicating authority for corporate insolvency resolution processes (CIRP) for companies and LLPs.
 - ◆ For individuals and partnership firms, the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) handles the process.
- **Insolvency Professionals:** IPs are licensed professionals who play a crucial role in managing the insolvency resolution process.
 - ◆ They act as intermediaries between the debtor and creditors and manage the affairs of the debtor during the insolvency process.
- **Time-bound Process:** The IBC mandates strict timelines for various processes involved in insolvency resolution to ensure timely resolution and prevent undue delays.
- **Liquidation:** If a resolution plan is not approved or implemented within the specified time frame, the corporate debtor may be liquidated to distribute the proceeds to creditors.
- **Cross-border Insolvency:** The IBC provides a framework for dealing with cross-border insolvency through cooperation and reciprocal arrangements with other countries.

Challenges

- **Operational Delays:** The strict timelines prescribed by the IBC are often difficult to adhere to due to various reasons such as legal complexities, coordination among stakeholders, and judicial backlog.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** There has been a lack of adequate infrastructure, including sufficient number of insolvency professionals (IPs) and trained personnel, to handle the increasing number of insolvency cases effectively.
- **Haircuts and Creditor Recovery:** The IBC aims to maximize the value of assets for creditors, but in practice, creditors often face significant haircuts (losses) during the resolution process.

Way Ahead

- In order to address the delays, the Parliamentary Standing Committee suggested that the NCLT should **not take more than 30 days after filing**,

to admit the insolvency application and transfer control of the company to a resolution process.

- **Citing the more than 50% vacancy** in the Tribunal compared to the sanctioned strength, it suggested recruitment in advance based on the projected number of cases.
- The IBC has undergone amendments since its enactment to address practical challenges and issues that have emerged.
 - ◆ However, continuous policy reforms and amendments are essential to adapt to evolving economic and legal landscapes.

Source: PIB

SC VERDICT ON RELEASE OF GM MUSTARD

Context

- The Supreme Court pronounced a split verdict on the **validity of the Centre's 2022 decision** granting conditional approval for **environmental release of genetically modified (GM) mustard crops**.

About

- In 2022, the **Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)**— a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and regulator of genetically modified organisms in the country— recommended the environmental release.
 - ◆ A subsequent decision was taken approving the environmental release of **transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-11**, a variety of GM mustard.
- In its recent judgment, the SC asked the Centre to **formulate a national policy** with regard to GM crops for research, cultivation, trade and commerce in the country.
- The case would now be referred to a three-judge Bench **to be constituted by the Chief Justice of India**.

What are GM crops?

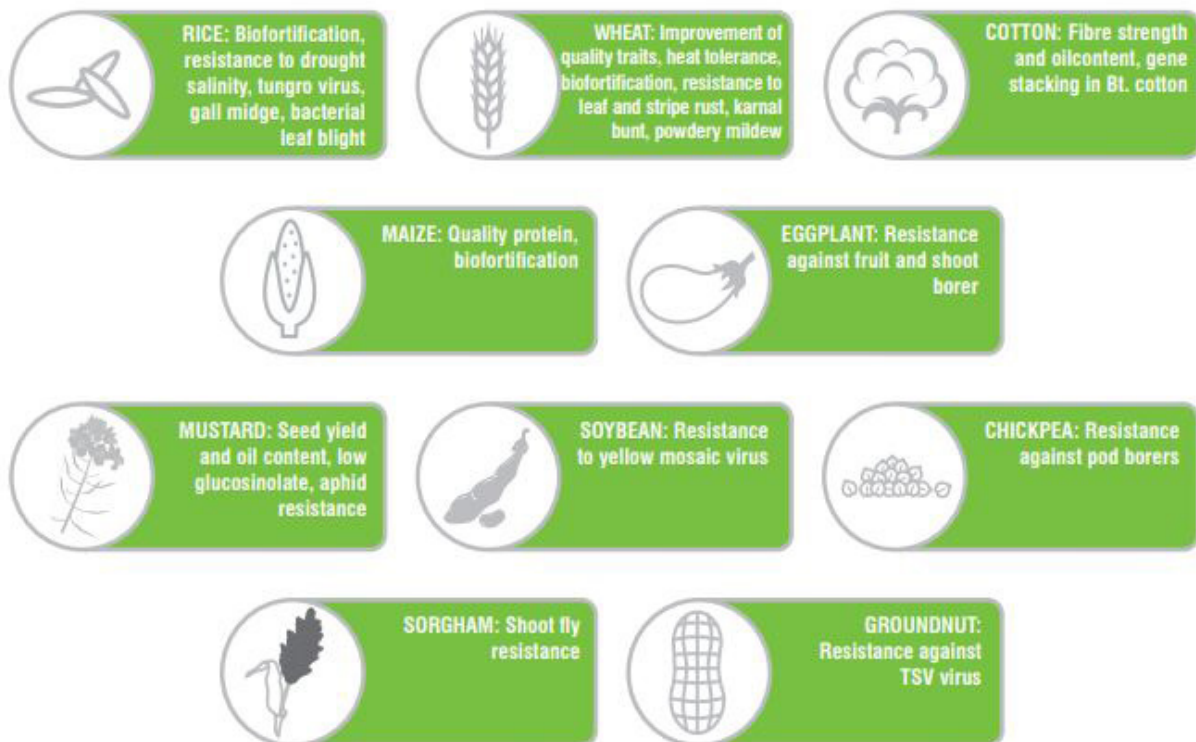
- Crops that have undergone **genetic engineering processes** to alter their DNA are referred to as genetically modified crops.
- This alteration is done **to introduce desirable traits** such as resistance to pests or herbicides, improved nutritional content, or increased yield.

- **The process of creating GM crops typically involves:** identification of desired traits, isolation of genes, insertion into crop genome, and expression of the trait.
- **The techniques used in GM crops are:** gene guns, electroporation, microinjection, agrobacterium etc.
- **The types of modification are:** transgenic, cis-genic, subgenic and multiple trait integration.
- **The main trait types** in GM crops are herbicide tolerance (HT), insect resistance (IR), Stacked traits etc.

Indian Scenario in GM crops

- **Bt Cotton:** In 2002, the GEAC had allowed the commercial release of Bt cotton.
 - ♦ Bt cotton has two alien genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) that allows the crop to develop a protein toxic to the common pest **pink bollworm**.
 - ♦ It is the only GM crop that is allowed in India.
- Many varieties of GM crops are under different stages of development, like **Bt brinjal** and **DMH-11 mustard**.

GM crops R&D in India



Regulatory framework in India

- **The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC):** It under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), is responsible for the assessment of proposals related to the commercial release of GM crops.
- **Acts and rules** that regulate GM crops in India are:
 - ♦ Environment Protection Act, 1986 (EPA)
 - ♦ Biological Diversity Act, 2002
 - ♦ Plant Quarantine Order, 2003

- ♦ GM policy under Foreign Trade Policy
- ♦ Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006
- ♦ Drugs and Cosmetics Rule (8th Amendment), 1988.

Need for GM crops

- **Food Security:** Genetically modified crops can improve yield, build resistances to pests, flood, frost, drought etc.
- **Sustainable food system:** Crops can also be modified to reduce carbon emissions and boost the sustainability of food production.

- **Higher Productivity:** With GM crops it is possible to produce more food from less area and with less chemical pesticides and fertilizer.
 - ♦ GM crop production uses only about **10%** of the land non-GM crop production uses.
- **Nutritional Security:** Genetic modifications can enhance the nutritional content of crops.
- **Meeting Consumer Preferences:** GM crops can be tailored to meet consumer preferences, such as crops with longer shelf life, enhanced flavor, or specific cooking qualities.

Reasons for opposition of GM crops

- **Unintended side effects:** The long-lasting effect of GM crops is yet to be studied and thus they should not be released commercially.
 - ♦ Genetic modification can bring changes that can be harmful to humans in the long run.
- **Threat to biodiversity:** Some crops have been engineered to create their own toxins against pests. This may harm non-targets such as farm animals that ingest them.
- **Health risks:** GM crops are modified to include antibiotics to kill germs and pests. These antibiotic markers will persist in human body after consumption and will render actual antibiotic medications less effective over a period of time, leading to superbug threats.
- **Social and economic issues:** There are concerns about multinational agribusiness companies taking over farming from the hands of small farmers.
 - ♦ Dependence on GM seed companies could prove to be a financial burden for farmers.
- **Public concern:** People in general are wary of GM crops as they are engineered in a lab and do not occur in Nature.

Way Forward

- The environmental release of DMH-11 marks the beginning of a new era in self-reliance and sustainability in agriculture. This will help to achieve the target of **Zero Hunger by 2030**.
- Governments must address the problems brought on by GM crops, particularly in the areas of safety testing, legislation, industrial strategy, and food labeling.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

PANCHAMASALI LINGAYATS

Context

- Panchamasali Lingayats, a sub-caste of Karnataka's dominant Lingayat community, have been demanding inclusion in Category 2A of the Other Backward Classes (OBC).

About

- **Karnataka state has four categories of OBC:** 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B based on the economic, social and educational status.
- These communities get preferential reservations in jobs and educational institutions based on the categories.
- While 2A are the most backward, 2B are moderate, and a little above them is 3A and 3B.

Panchamasali Lingayats

- The Lingayats are followers of **12th-century social reformer Basavanna**, who was inspired by the Bhakti Movement.
- A treasurer in the court of **King Bijjala II**, Basavanna rejected Brahmin rituals and temple worship and envisaged a society that was casteless, free of discrimination, and where men and women had equal opportunities.
- Lingayats had been classified as a Hindu subcaste called "**Veerashaiva Lingayats**" and they are considered to be **Shaivites**.

Source: IE

CHANDRA SHEKHAR AZAD

In News

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Chandra Shekhar Azad on his birth anniversary.

About Chandra Shekhar Azad

- Chandra Shekhar Tiwari, popularly known as Chandra Shekhar Azad, was born on 23 July 1906.'
- **Entry into Politics: He** joined the Non-Cooperation Movement at 15 years old in 1921.
 - ♦ Arrested in December 1921 and displayed defiance by declaring his name as "Azad,"

his father's name as "Swatantrata," and residence as "Jail."

- **Involvement in Revolutionary Activities:** Disillusioned by the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, he joined the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) led by Ram Prasad Bismil.
 - ♦ Participated in fundraising through robberies of government establishments.
 - ♦ Joined significant actions including the **Kakori Train Robbery (1925)**, the **killing of John P. Saunders (1928)**, and the **attempted assassination of the Viceroy (1929)**.
- **Formation of the HSRA:** In 1928, Azad, along with Bhagat Singh and others, reorganized the HRA into the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) with the aim of achieving an independent India based on socialist principles.
- **Death:** On 27 February 1931, surrounded by police in Alfred Park (now Azad Park) in Allahabad, he engaged in a shootout.
 - ♦ He fought bravely, allowing his comrades to escape, but ultimately shot himself with the last bullet to avoid capture.
- **Legacy :**He remains a symbol of fearless patriotism and dedication to the cause of Indian independence, known for his commitment to revolutionary ideals and sacrifices made in the struggle against British rule.

Source:PIB

CORRIDOR PROJECTS FOR VISHNUPAD AND MAHABODHI TEMPLES

Context

- The Finance Minister announced **corridor projects for Bihar's Vishnupad and Mahabodhi temples** during her Union Budget speech.

About

- These will be modelled on the successful **Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor**, to transform them into **world-class pilgrim and tourist destinations**.
- **The Vishnupad Temple at Gaya:** The Hindu temple is dedicated to **Lord Vishu**.
 - ♦ Architecturally, the temple is around 100 feet tall and has 44 pillars.

- ♦ It is located on the **banks of the Falgu river** and was built in **1787** on the orders of **Queen Ahilyabai Holkar** of Ahmadnagar.



- **Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya:** The Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
 - ♦ The temple stands to the **east of the Mahabodhi Tree**, where Gautam Buddha is believed to have attained nirvana.
 - ♦ The temple has a unique shape and a height of **170 feet**.
 - ♦ The Mahabodhi Temple Complex is the first temple **built by Emperor Asoka** in the 3rd century B.C., and the present temple dates from the 5th–6th centuries.



Source: IE

DIGITAL POSTAL INDEX NUMBER

In News

- The Department of Posts releases a beta version of DIGIPIN (Digital Postal Index Number) for public comments and expert opinion.

About DIGIPIN

- It is an initiative to establish a standardized, geo-coded addressing system in India, for ensuring simplified addressing solutions for citizen-centric delivery of public and private services.

- The DIGIPIN layer will act as the addressing reference system which can be used for logically locating addresses with directional properties built into it due to the logical naming pattern followed in its construction.
- The DIGIPIN is proposed to be fully available in the public domain and can be easily accessed by everyone.
- The DIGIPIN Grid system being an addressing referencing system, can be used as the base layer for other ecosystems, including various service providers and utilities, where addressing is one of the processes in the workflow.

Source: PIB

PRADHAN MANTRI JANJATIYA UNNAT GRAM ABHIYAN

In News

- The Budget introduced the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan for improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities.

About

- This initiative aims to provide **saturation coverage for tribal families** in tribal-majority villages and aspirational districts, covering 63,000 villages and benefiting 5 crore tribal people.
- Saturation approach aims to enhance capabilities and empower people through targeted interventions in education, health, and skill development.

Source: PIB

CAPITAL GAINS TAX

Context

- The Union Budget 2024-25 has raised taxation on income on short-term and long-term capital gains and also doubled the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures & options (F&O) of securities.

About

- Long-term capital gains (LTCG) on all financial and non-financial assets were **increased to 12.5 percent, from 10 percent**.
 - ♦ However, the exemption limit of Rs 1 lakh for LTCG on these assets has also increased to Rs 1.25 lakh.
- The rate on short-term capital gains (STCG) has been hiked to **20 per cent from 15 per cent**.

Capital Gains Tax

- It is a form of **direct tax** that is paid due to the income that is earned from the sale of assets or investments.
- Investments in farms, bonds, shares, businesses, art, and home come under capital assets.
- **Long-term gains** are levied on profits of investments held for more than a year.
- **Short-term gains** are taxed at an individual's regular income tax rate, which is higher than the tax on long-term gains.

Source: IE

NAMO DRONE DIDI SCHEME

Context

- The Finance Ministry has allocated **Rs 500 crore for the Namu Drone Didi scheme** and **Rs 365.64 crore for National Mission on Natural Farming** for 2024-25.

Namu Drone Didi scheme

- It is an initiative aimed at providing drones to **15,000** selected women self-help groups (SHGs) during the period 2023-24 to 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers.
- The women beneficiaries are trained to become drone pilots under the initiative.

How will Drone Didis help farmers?

- The trained women drone pilots will help farmers in various agricultural operations like **fertilizer spraying, sowing seeds and crop monitoring**.
- The initiative intends to modernize Indian agricultural practices and enhance productivity by placing the cutting edge technology at the disposal of rural women.
- The Centre will provide each SHG identified a **subsidy up to 80 per cent** towards the cost of a drone or a maximum of Rs 8 lakh.

Source: IE

AIR BREATHING PROPULSION TECHNOLOGY

In News

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully completed the second experimental flight demonstrating Air Breathing Propulsion Technology.

About Air Breathing Propulsion Technology

- Air Breathing Propulsion Technology **utilizes atmospheric oxygen for combustion**, eliminating the need to carry oxidizer.
- The absence of an on-board oxidiser in the atmospheric phase significantly reduces the rocket's weight. **For example**, ISRO's largest rocket, LVM3, carries 555 tonnes of propellant, of which 385 tonnes is oxidiser.
- This technology has the potential to revolutionize space travel by allowing vehicles to use atmospheric oxygen as an oxidizer, potentially reducing the overall weight of the propulsion system and increasing payload capacity.
- **Types of Air-Breathing Engines:** Ramjet, Scramjet, and Dual Mode Ramjet (DMRJ). Ramjets operate at supersonic speeds, Scramjets at hypersonic speeds, and DMRJs can transition between subsonic and supersonic combustion modes.

Source: TH

TAXONOMY FOR CLIMATE FINANCE

Context

- The 2024 Union Budget, presented by the Finance Minister, includes **developing a taxonomy for climate finance** to enhance the availability of capital for climate adaptation and mitigation.

What is taxonomy for climate finance?

- Climate finance taxonomy refers to a **set of standardised regulations and guidelines** to inform companies and investors on making impactful investments towards environmental conservation and combating the climate crisis.
 - ♦ It is a system that classifies **which parts of the economy may be marketed as sustainable investments**.
 - ♦ It helps **guide investors and banks** in directing trillions toward impactful investments to tackle climate change.
- Taxonomies for sustainable climate financing, in general, include a **detailed list of economic sectors and activities** and corresponding criteria that determine if it **aligns with larger climate goals**.
- **Countries Having the System:** South Africa, Colombia, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Canada, and Mexico are some of the countries

which have developed taxonomies. The European Union has done this as well.

Source: IE

TINZAPARIN

In News

- Researchers found tinzaparin significantly reduced damage to human cells due to spitting cobra venom.

About Tinzaparin

- Tinzaparin is a type of medication known as a **low molecular weight heparin (LMWH)**.
- It is used to prevent and treat blood clots, particularly deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE).
- It works by inhibiting certain clotting factors in the blood, thereby reducing the risk of blood clots forming or worsening.

Recent research

- Tinzaparin blocks venom's interaction with cell receptors, preventing damage.
- It mimics heparan sulphate, which the venom targets, thereby reducing toxicity.
- Researchers are planning human clinical trials following promising results.

Importance

- The study's findings may lead to a breakthrough in snakebite treatment, especially in regions with high snakebite morbidity.
- Tinzaparin, a widely available and inexpensive drug, could revolutionize snakebite treatment.

Do you know ?

- Red spitting cobra (*Naja pallida*) from Tanzania sprays venom when threatened.
- Venom causes severe damage to cells and the nervous system in humans.
 - ♦ Encounters with venomous snakes kill about 1.4 lakh people every year, especially in the tropical regions of Africa and Asia.
- Traditional antivenom production from snake venom has limitations.
 - ♦ It's costly, has side effects, and requires careful handling and storage.

Source: TH

