

**13– 03 – 2024**

**News: Kala Azar**

- India achieved significant progress in eliminating Kala Azar (KA), reporting less than one case per 10,000 population in 2023, compared to previous years.

**Kala Azar**

- Kala Azar (visceral leishmaniasis), **also known as Black Fever is a fatal disease** caused by a protozoan parasite *Leishmania donovani*.

**Symptoms**

- It is **characterised by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.**

**Prevalence**

- Most **cases occur in Brazil, east Africa and India.** An estimated 50,000 to 90,000 new cases of VL occur worldwide annually, with only 25-45% reported to **WHO.**
- It has an **outbreak and mortality potential.**

## Transmission

- Leishmania parasites spread through bites of infected female sandflies, feeding on blood for egg production. Over 70 animal species, including humans, can carry these parasites.

## Major Risk Factors

- Poverty, poor housing, and sanitation.
- Diets lacking essential nutrients.
- Movement into high-transmission areas.
- Urbanisation, deforestation, climate change.

## Diagnosis and Treatment

- Suspected visceral leishmaniasis cases require immediate medical attention. Diagnosis involves clinical signs combined with parasitological or serological tests.
- Left untreated, it can be fatal in 95% of cases.

## Prevention and Control

- Early diagnosis and prompt treatment are crucial in reducing disease prevalence, and preventing disabilities, and death.

- Vector control, such as **insecticide spray and the use of insecticide-treated nets**, helps reduce transmission by decreasing the number of sandflies.
- **Effective disease surveillance is important for monitoring and acting during epidemics and high case fatality rates.**
- **Social mobilization and strengthening partnerships, including community education and collaboration with stakeholders**, are critical for effective control.

### **India's Efforts to Control Kala Azar**

- The Government of India launched a **centrally sponsored Kala-azar control program in 1990-91, which was later revised in 2015.**
- The **program aimed to eliminate Kala-azar by 2023, aligning with the WHO neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) Roadmap goal of 2030.**
- The **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), 2003 is an umbrella programme for prevention and control of vector borne diseases viz., malaria, lymphatic filariasis, kala azar, and chikungunya.**