

21 – 10 – 2024

News: Kala Azar

- India is at the verge of eliminating Kala Azar as the country have managed to keep the number of cases under one in 10,000 for two consecutive years.
- For an **elimination tag to be conferred, the cases must be below one in 10, 000 for 3 consecutive years.**
- A **disease is certified as eliminated as a public issue when a country can prove that local transmission has been interrupted for a set period, and there is a system to prevent the disease from re-emerging.**

Kala Azar

- Kala Azar (visceral leishmaniasis), **also known as Black Fever is a fatal disease** caused by a protozoan parasite *Leishmania donovani*.
- It is **endemic to 80 countries**, however, In 2022, **eastern Africa accounted for 73% of global VL caseload, 50% of which occurred in children aged under 15 years.**

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

- In India, *Leishmania donovani* is the only parasite causing this disease.
- 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.
- In 2023, Bangladesh became the first country in the world to eradicate VL.
- India is at the verge of eliminating Kala Azar as the country have managed to keep the number of cases under one in 10,000 for two consecutive years, as prescribed by World Health Organization (WHO).
- Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a new framework to help eradicate Kala Azar in eastern Africa.

The framework outlines five main strategies for guiding VL elimination:

- Early diagnosis and treatment.
- Integrated vector management.
- Effective surveillance.
- Advocacy, social mobilisation and partnership-building.
- Implementation and operational research.

News: National Commission for Women

- Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar has been appointed as the new NCW chairperson, succeeding Rekha Sharma.

National Commission for Women (NCW)

- National Commission for Women's Act, 1992 provides for the constitution of National Commission for Women.
- The commission consists of a **Chairperson, Secretary and 5 other members** appointed by **Central government**. **One member shall be from SC/ST community.**
- They report annually **to Central Government**.
- Members hold office for **3 years or until they reach 65 years of age, whichever is earlier.**
- The commission is also the **implementing agency of 24/7 helpline number for women.**

Powers

- **Investigate any matter that relates to the safeguard of women.**
- **Summon and enforce the attendance of any person** from any part of India.
- Take complaints received in **writing or verbal and even in suo moto.**

- Fund litigation involving issues affecting a large body of women.
- The order of the commission shall have a **decree of the civil court**.

Removal

- The **Central Government may by order remove** the Chairperson or any other Member from office if the Chairperson or any other member **is adjudged insolvent, or engages during his term of office in any paid employment outside the duties of his office, or refuses to act or becomes incapable of acting, or is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court, or has so abused his office as to render his continuance in office detrimental to the public interest, or is convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for an offense which in the opinion of the Central Government, involves moral turpitude.**
- **No person shall be removed until that person has been given an opportunity of being heard in the matter.**