



DAILY NEWSPAPER
ANALYSIS
THE HINDU
(26th November, 2018)



THE HINDU
Daily News Paper

Ahead on malaria: on reduction in cases in India

Context:-

- India has suffered from a major burden of malaria for decades, with high levels of morbidity and death. But the declining trend of the scourge.
- The **World Malaria Report 2018** of the **World Health Organisation** notes that India's record offers great promise in the quest to cut the number of new cases and deaths globally by at least 40% by 2020, and to end the epidemic by 2030.

Reason for Decline:-

- **Sustained public health action** to end Malaria is one of the reason to achievement of good results.
- lot of that optimism has to do with the progress made by Odisha, one of the most endemic States. Due to Investments made there on health such as
 - recruiting **accredited social health (ASHA)** workers
 - large-scale distribution of **insecticide-treated bednets**,
 - together with strategies to encourage **health-seeking behaviour**

- Due to greater **political and administrative commitment**, **WHO report** highlights a sharp drop in the number of cases in the Odisha.

Challenges to India to Eliminate Malaria:-

- India still accounted for 6% global malaria case and 7% of death caused by it according to WHO report of 2016.
- Still India has **a weak surveillance system**, where India is able to detect only 8% of Malaria case via its system according to WHO.
- India is being **resistance to combination therapy using artemisinin**. Recent reports indicate that some patients in **West Bengal** became resistant to the treatment protocol used for the **falciparum parasite**, which causes debilitating cerebral malaria and leads to a high number of deaths.
- **Low funding** per person at risk is also a hindrance to achieve the target of **reduction of Malaria beyond 40% by 2020 and eliminate it by 2030.**
- Malaria is mainly concentrated in the states of Orissa, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura because of the **inaccessible terrain**, many areas get cut off post monsoon, presence of efficient vectors, mosquito that transmit malaria and difficult terrain because of which malaria continues to be high in many pockets.

Suggestion:-

- Eliminating malaria requires **an integrated approach**, and this should involve Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal, which have a higher burden of the disease.
- **Monitoring system** in India needs to be improved.
- The reduction in the number of cases should not produce complacency and lead to a reduction in deployment of health workers and funding cuts to programme components.
- This positive trend should encourage authorities not just in Odisha, but in the northeastern States and elsewhere too to cut the transmission of the disease further.

Way Ahead:-

- Odisha's experience with using public health education as a tool and reaching out to remote populations with advice needs to be replicated.
- Given that emerging resistance to treatment has been reported in Myanmar, among other countries in this belt, there is a need for a coordinated approach to rid southern Asia of malaria.

- cooperation and infrastructure simultaneously. Vietnam's role as country coordinator for India in ASEAN will come to a close in 2018.
- While the ties have progressed under the Look East and Act East Policies, going forward they need to factor in pragmatism, helping relations to move forward.
- India's ability to look beyond the prism of optics will remain a core challenge.

THANK YOU

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