



Kala-azar Elimination: Bihar to Miss Deadline

Why in News

The new cases of [Kala-azar or Visceral Leishmaniasis](#) have been reported in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, casting **serious doubt** on the state government's efforts **to eradicate the disease in the state by 2022.**

- Bihar has already **missed the Kala-azar elimination target four times since 2010.**
- The first deadline was 2010, under the [National Health Programme](#), followed by 2015. It was later extended to 2017 and 2020 due to the government's failure to eliminate Kala-azar.

Key Points

- **Kala-azar or Leishmaniasis:**
 - Visceral leishmaniasis, also known as kala-azar, is characterized by **irregular bouts of fever, substantial weight loss, swelling of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.**
 - If the disease is not treated, the **fatality rate** in developing countries can be as high as **100% within 2 years.**
 - It is a [Neglected Tropical Disease \(NTD\)](#) affecting almost 100 countries including India.
 - NTDs are a diverse group of **communicable diseases** that prevail in **tropical and subtropical conditions** in 149 countries.
 - It is caused by a **parasite called Leishmania**, which is transmitted through the **bite of sand flies.**
 - There are three types of leishmaniasis:
 - **Visceral leishmaniasis**, which affects multiple organs and is the most serious form of the disease.
 - **Cutaneous leishmaniasis**, which causes skin sores and is the most common form.
 - **Mucocutaneous leishmaniasis**, which causes skin and mucosal lesions.
 - Visceral leishmaniasis, which is commonly known as Kala-azar in India, is fatal in over 95% of the cases, if left untreated.
- **Reasons for Missing the Deadline:**
 - **Lack Direction:** Elimination programmes lack direction and **Kala-azar returns year after year.**
 - **Widespread Poverty:** It was mostly the poor belonging to the **Dalits, Other Backward Communities and Muslims**, who were the main victims of the disease.
- **Trend of Decline:** However, there also has been a **trend of decline in the number of Kala-azar cases** in Bihar in the last few years.
 - There were **23,084 cases in 2010**, and by **2020, there were 2,712 cases**, according to official data.

National Kala-azar Elimination Programme

- The National Health Policy-2002 set the goal of Kala-azar elimination in India by the year 2010 which was revised to 2015.
- Continuing focused activities with high political commitment, **India signed a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh and Nepal** to achieve Kala-azar elimination from the South-East Asia Region (SEAR).
- **Elimination** is defined as reducing the annual incidence of Kala-azar to **less than 1 case per 10,000 population** at the sub-district level in India.
- Presently all programmatic activities are being implemented through the **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)** which is an umbrella programme for prevention & control of vector borne diseases and is subsumed under **National Health Mission (NHM)**.

National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme

- NVBDCP is the central nodal agency for prevention and control of six vector borne diseases i.e. **Malaria**, **Dengue**, **Lymphatic Filariasis**, Kala-azar, **Japanese Encephalitis** and **Chikungunya** in India.
- It works under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Source: DTE

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