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Kala Azar disease

Published On: 26-12-2022

Why is in news? PM says, soon India will completely eradicate Kala Azar disease

In his Mann Ki Baat programme on All India Radio, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised that India has **eradicated diseases like Smallpox, Polio and 'Guinea Worm'**.

He spoke about Kala Azar, another disease which is about to be eradicated. He expressed confidence that people's awareness in these states will help the government's efforts to eliminate the disease from these districts as well.

Visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as **kala-azar or "black fever"**, is the most severe form of leishmaniasis and, without proper diagnosis and treatment, is associated with high fatality.

Leishmaniasis is a disease caused by **protozoan parasites** called **Leishmania donovani**.

The parasite migrates to the internal organs such as the **liver, spleen** (hence "visceral"), **and bone marrow**, and, if left untreated, will almost always result in the death of the host.

Signs and symptoms include fever, weight loss, fatigue, anemia, and substantial swelling of the liver and spleen. Of particular concern, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is the emerging problem of HIV/VL co-infection.

Most cases **occur in Brazil, East Africa and in India**. It remains one of the top parasitic diseases with outbreak and mortality potential.

In 2020, more than 90% of new cases reported to WHO occurred in 10 countries: Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Eritrea, India, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

VL is the **second-largest parasitic killer in the world** (after malaria), responsible for an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 deaths each year worldwide.

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