



KALA AZAR : SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NEWS : India's Push for WHO Certification in Eliminating Kala-azar

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS ?

India is on the verge of achieving a significant milestone by seeking certification from the **World Health Organization (WHO)** for **eliminating Kala-azar** as a public health problem. The country has maintained the required criteria for elimination—less than one case per 10,000 people for two consecutive years.

Kala Azar (Visceral Leishmaniasis) - Key Points:

- **Kala Azar** (Visceral Leishmaniasis) is the second deadliest parasitic disease after malaria in India.
- **Cause:** It is caused by the protozoan parasite *Leishmania donovani*, transmitted through the bite of an infected female sandfly.
- **Symptoms:** Irregular fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anemia.
- **Geographical Prevalence:** Most cases occur in Brazil, East Africa, and India.
- **Fatality:** If untreated, it can be fatal in 95% of cases.
- **Forms of Leishmaniasis:**
 - **Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL):** Fatal if untreated, affects internal organs.
 - **Cutaneous Leishmaniasis (CL):** Causes skin ulcers, can lead to scarring and disability.
 - **Mucocutaneous Leishmaniasis:** Destroys mucous membranes of the nose, mouth, and throat.

Leishmaniasis

Information for internally displaced persons and refugees

Source of infection

Vector-borne disease transmitted through the bites of infected female phlebotomine sandflies, which feed on blood to produce eggs.



Symptoms

Leishmaniasis has three forms: visceral (Kala-Azar, most serious form); cutaneous (most common); and mucocutaneous. Depending upon its type it can be fatal. Symptoms include:

Visceral leishmaniasis



Irregular fever



Anaemia



Weight loss



Spleen and liver enlargement



Rash usually on face, upper arms, trunk and other parts of the body

Cutaneous leishmaniasis



Ulcers on exposed parts of the body (face, arms and legs)



Disfigured skin lesions after recovery

Mucocutaneous leishmaniasis



Lesions in the mucous membranes (nose, throat or mouth)



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- **Post Kala-azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL):** Causes scaly patches and nodules up to 2 years after infection.
- **HIV Co-infection:** People with HIV are more prone to full-blown disease, relapse, and high mortality.
- **Treatment:** Treated through an IV drip of medication.

India's Progress Toward Elimination:

- To eliminate Kala-azar, India must maintain a rate of fewer than 1 case per 10,000 people for one more year.
- **National Health Policy (2002):** Initially aimed for elimination by 2010, revised to 2020.
- **WHO Target:** Global Kala-azar elimination target extended to 2030.
- **Vulnerable Regions:** Highest cases are from Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and parts of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Bihar accounts for 70%** of India's cases due to poor sanitation and suitable climate for sandfly breeding.

Source : <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/kala-azar-cases-under-control-for-two-years-india-gears-to-apply-for-elimination-certificate/article68772300.ece#:~:text=India%20could%20be%20at%20the,for%20two%20consecutive%20years%20now.>

