

Spike in vector-borne diseases

What is the issue?

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- Many vector-borne diseases, such as chikungunya, dengue, malaria and others, in many parts of the country onset much before the usual time this year.

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- Delhi alone has witnessed 92 confirmed cases of chikungunya and dengue, with 38 deaths, since January.

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- Usually, such diseases spike during the rainy season due to conditions favourable for the proliferation of mosquitoes and other vectors.

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What are the reasons?

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- It is a clear indication of the health authorities' failure to take necessary preventive action.

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- The premature disease explosion is due to

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1. Poor sanitation,
2. Careless construction activity,
3. Sloppy upkeep of overhead tanks and other water containers,
4. Inefficient solid waste management and
5. The virtual collapse of the mosquito control programme.

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- The most commonly used method to control mosquitoes, is the least effective.

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- It kills only the adults without curbing breeding, which holds the key to containing mosquito population.

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What should be done?

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- Some species of fishes are known to feed on the larvae of the disease-spreading mosquitoes.

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- These should be multiplied and introduced in water bodies where mosquitoes generally breed.

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- China is reportedly using genetically modified male mosquitoes which can kill the females by passing on a killer toxin to them during copulation.

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- Those living in risk-prone areas should be treated with the use of anti-viral drugs such as Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and Zanamivir.

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- These drugs not only shorten the duration and severity of the illness but also serve as virtual vaccines.

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- The alternative systems of medicines can also be looked into.

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- The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) has announced the development a drug called "AYUSH PJ7" that can control dengue.

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Source: Business Standard

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