Measures to Eliminate Malaria from India

What is the issue?

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- India has a high incidence of malaria and it is committed to eliminate malaria by 2030.
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- Public private partnership is required to achieve the malaria elimination target.
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What is malaria?

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- A disease caused by a plasmodium parasite, transmitted by the bite of infected mosquitoes (usually female anopheles mosquitos).
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- The severity of malaria varies based on the species of plasmodium.
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- Symptoms of the disease includes chills, fever and sweating, usually occurring a few weeks after being bitten.
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- It is preventable through a Malaria vaccine and it is curable disease.
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What is the status of Malaria in India?

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- Malaria exists in all States in India, and 95 per cent of Indians are at risk.
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- Most cases are reported from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.
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- North-Eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura also have high transmission.
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- However, the scale and distribution of this devastating disease is not well documented.
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- Estimates range from 1 million to 18 million cases and from 400 to 48,000 deaths per year.
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What are the challenges in eliminating the disease?

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- Majority of malaria in India is diagnosed and treated (or commonly misdiagnosed and mistreated) in the private sector.
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- Private Doctors and clinics have no obligation to follow government guidelines, use recommended drugs, or report malaria cases to State authorities.
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- In 2015, 86 million malaria treatments were procured in the private sector, compared to just 2 million in the public sector.
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- Each year, the private sector procures nearly 10 million injections of Artemisinin Monotherapy, a treatment that is strongly discouraged in India and elsewhere because it accelerates the development of deadly drug resistance.
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- The misuse of malaria drugs in India is an irony, given that India is by far the largest supplier of high-quality approved malaria drugs to the rest of the world.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- In 2017 India launched national strategic plan for malaria elimination, awareness about the plan needs to be created through campaigns.
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- National initiatives must promote innovative strategies, incentivise the appropriate use of diagnostics, drugs and insecticides, and ensure that all malaria cases are reported.
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- The most affected States must aggressively bring their malaria down using effective vector-control and case management practices, combined with robust surveillance systems.
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- States will have to tailor their programmes to achieve elimination, especially in tribal areas where the burden of malaria is often the highest.
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- A single approach to malaria elimination will not work in any large country, especially in India where the biology, entomology and epidemiology of the disease vary considerably.
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- Thus partnership between communities, civil society, private sector, and public health agencies is required.
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Source: Business Line

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