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,
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2. Careless construction activity,
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3. Sloppy upkeep of overhead tanks and other water containers,
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4. Inefficient solid waste management and
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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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