World Malaria Report 2018 - Odisha's Progress

Why in news?

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Odisha's performance pushed down India’s malaria count for 2017 according to World Health Organization's World Malaria Report 2018.

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What are the highlights of the report?

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- As per the report, in 2017, 11 countries accounted for roughly 70% of estimated malaria cases and deaths globally.
- Apart from India, 10 of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Among these countries, only India reported progress in reducing its malaria cases in 2017 compared to 2016.
- By 2017, India accounted for 4% of the global burden of malaria morbidity.
- It accounted for 52% of deaths outside of the WHO African Region, despite “impressive gains”.
- India registered three million fewer cases which is a fall of 24% in cases from 2016 to 2017.
- It is largely due to substantial declines of the disease in the highly malarious state of Odisha.
- Notably, Odisha is home to approximately 40% of all malaria cases in the country.

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What were Odisha's notable measures?

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- Malaria cases in Odisha have been coming down steadily since 2003, with a marked reduction since 2008.
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- The number of cases in July-December 2017 period fell by nearly 50%, compared to the same period in 2016.
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- The report commends the Odisha government for its rigorous training to detect, treat and also to prevent malaria outbreaks.
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- The state did pioneering effort to upgrade skills of health workers, and the Self Help Group by its #MissionShakti initiative.
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- A notable aspect of Odisha's approach is its network of Accredited Social Health Activists or ASHAs.
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- They served as front-line workers to deliver essential malaria services across the state, particularly in rural and remote areas.
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- Success factors include rejuvenated political commitment and strengthened technical leadership.
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- Efforts focused on prioritizing the right mix of vector control measures and increased levels of domestic funding to back them.
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- Large-scale distribution of insecticide-treated bednets was taken up.
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- Also, strategies to encourage health-seeking behaviour have paid off in the state.
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What are the concerns to be addressed?

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- One issue that requires monitoring in India is resistance to combination therapy.
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- Recent reports indicate that some patients in West Bengal became resistant to the treatment protocol used for the falciparum parasite.
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- Falciparum parasite causes debilitating cerebral malaria and leads to a high

number of deaths.
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- Emerging resistance to treatment has been reported in Myanmar, among other countries in this belt.
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- So there is a need for a coordinated approach to rid southern Asia of malaria.
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- WHO said in a recent assessment that the treatment policy was changed to another efficacious set of combination drugs in some north-eastern States.
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- Nevertheless, the phenomenon requires close monitoring.
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What lies ahead?

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- India has suffered from a major burden of malaria for decades, with high levels of morbidity and death.
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- But the report noted that India’s record offered great promise in the quest to cut the number of new cases and deaths.
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- At this rate, malaria can be reduced globally by at least 40% by 2020, and the epidemic could end by 2030.
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- Eliminating malaria requires an integrated approach, involving states with a higher burden of the disease - Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
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- Odisha's positive trend should encourage authorities in other states too to further cut disease transmission.
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- Its experience with using public health education as a tool and reaching out to remote populations with advice needs to be replicated.
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Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

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