



Malaria Free China

Why in News

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has declared China as “malaria-free”.

- It is a result of a seven decade-long, **multi-pronged health strategy** that was able to entirely eliminate indigenous cases for four straight years.

Key Points

▪ About Malaria Free Status:

- **Certification Process:** Certification of malaria elimination is the official recognition by WHO of a country’s malaria-free status.
 - WHO grants the certification when a country has demonstrated with rigorous, credible evidence that the **chain of indigenous malaria transmission by Anopheles mosquitoes has been interrupted nationwide for at least the past three consecutive years.**
 - A country must also demonstrate the capacity to prevent the re-establishment of transmission.
 - The final decision on awarding a malaria-free certification rests with the **WHO Director-General**, based on a recommendation by the independent **Malaria Elimination Certification Panel (MECP).**
- **Western Pacific Region:** China is the first country in the WHO Western Pacific Region to be awarded a malaria-free certification in more than 3 decades.
 - **Other Countries:** In Western Pacific region the countries that have achieved this status include Australia (1981), Singapore (1982) and Brunei Darussalam (1987).
- **Global Status:** Globally, 40 countries and territories have been granted a malaria-free certification from WHO – including, most recently, El Salvador (2021), Algeria (2019), Argentina (2019), Paraguay (2018) and Uzbekistan (2018).

▪ Disease Burden (Global):

- According to the [World Malaria Report, 2020](#), the **number of malaria cases worldwide in 2019 was around 229 million**, with 4,09,000 lives lost to the mosquito-borne disease.
- **Majority of cases were reported in Africa**, while **India and Southeast Asia recorded a significant drop.**
 - **Cases in India fell from approximately 20 million to 6 million.**
 - **India is the only high endemic country which has reported a decline of 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018.**

▪ China's Malaria Strategy:

- **Started in 1950s:** The efforts began in the early 1950s, a time when China was reporting millions of cases annually, starting with a multi-pronged approach of **providing anti-malarial medicines while targeting mosquito breeding grounds and using insecticide spraying.**

- **The 523 Project:** It led to the discovery of **artemisinin** in the 1970s.
 - Artemisinin is the core compound of artemisinin-based combination therapies, the **most effective antimalarial drugs** available today.
- **Insecticide-treated Nets:** In the 1980s, China began using insecticide-treated nets widely, distributing 2.4 million nets by 1988.
- **1-3-7 Strategy:** The strategy refers to:
 - A **one-day deadline to report a malaria diagnosis,**
 - **Confirming a case and determining the spread by the third day,** and
 - **Measures taken to stop the spread by the seventh day,** along with continued surveillance in high-risk areas.
- **Global Fund:** With assistance from the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#) starting in 2003, China “stepped up training, staffing, laboratory equipment, medicines and mosquito control.”

Malaria

- **Malaria** is a life threatening **mosquito borne blood disease caused by plasmodium parasites.**
- It is **predominantly found in** the tropical and subtropical areas of Africa, South America as well as Asia.
- The parasites **spread through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.**
- After entering the human body, parasites initially multiply within the liver cells and then **attack the Red Blood Cells (RBCs)** resulting in their rupture.
- There are **5 parasite species** that cause malaria in humans, and 2 of these species – Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax – pose the greatest threat.
- **Symptoms of malaria** include fever and flu-like illness, including shaking chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness.
- It is **preventable as well as curable.**
- The [RTS,S vaccine](#) trains the immune system to **attack the malaria parasite Plasmodium falciparum,** the most deadly species of the malaria parasite.

Recent Initiatives of WHO

- The WHO has also identified 25 countries with the potential to eradicate malaria by 2025 under its [‘E-2025 Initiative’](#).

Initiatives to Curb Malaria in India

- In India, malaria elimination efforts were initiated in 2015 and were intensified after the launch of the **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME)** in 2016 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
 - NFME is in line with WHO’s Global Technical Strategy for Malaria, 2016-2030, which guides the WHO **Global Malaria Programme (GMP)**, responsible for coordinating WHO's global efforts to control and eliminate malaria.
- The [National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination \(2017-22\)](#) was launched in July 2017 which laid down strategies for the following five years.
 - It gives year wise elimination targets in various parts of the country depending upon the endemicity of malaria.
- Implementation of the [High Burden to High Impact \(HBHI\) initiative](#) was started in four states (West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh) in July 2019.
- [Distribution of Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets \(LLINs\)](#) to high burden areas has led to a reduction in endemicity in these otherwise very high endemic states.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has established **Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India)** which is a conglomeration of partners working on malaria control.

Source: TH

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