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**Daily News Pedia**

**Global fight on malaria stalled: WHO**

As per the WHO World Malaria Report 2018, India is the only high-burden country moving in a positive direction, with Odisha emerging as the best performing state in its fight against Malaria.

The WHO report reveals a plateauing trend in the number of people affected by malaria globally, eg. in 2017, there were an estimated 219 million cases of malaria compared to 217 million in 2016.

But in the previous years, the number of people contracting malaria globally had seen steadily falling, from 239 million in 2010 to 214 million in 2015. Foreign funding to some of the most affected countries has declined, in certain instances by more than 20 percent for every individual at risk of contracting the disease.

Malaria, which is spread to people through the bites of infected female mosquitoes, occurs in 91 countries but about 90% of the cases and deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa. A considerable proportion of people at risk of infection are not being protected, including pregnant women and children in Africa. The disease killed more than 4 lakh people last year, the majority of them children under five in Africa.

Another constraint in fighting malaria has been mosquitoes building up resistance to some insecticides. According to the WHO, approximately 70 per cent of the world's malaria burden is concentrated in 11 countries — 10 in sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) and India.

Most malaria cases reported last year were in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, India, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda. Five countries accounted for nearly half of the cases: Nigeria (25 percent), DR Congo (11 percent), Mozambique (five percent), and India and Uganda with four percent each.

However, the number of countries nearing continuous elimination grew to 46 in 2017 from 37 in 2010 including countries such as Ethiopia, India, Pakistan and Rwanda recording “substantial” declines in malaria cases. China and El Salvador are two countries where malaria had long been endemic with no local transmission of malaria reported in 2017,” it noted.

As per the WHO, Paraguay in 2018 became the first country in American continent to receive this status in 45 years.

India's Case: India has been identified as the top country marking maximum progress in reducing malaria cases among the 11 highest burden countries, registering a 24 per cent decrease in 2017 compared to 2016, according to a World Health Organisation (WHO) report. As per the WHO World Malaria Report 2018, India is the only high-burden country moving in a positive direction, with Odisha emerging as the best performing state in its fight against Malaria.

However, the report suggests that 1.25 billion Indians still remain at the risk of getting diagnosed with malaria.

Addressing the problem: WHO said it was embarking on new ways to scale up the battle against one of the world's deadliest diseases. The plan includes country-led projects to "jumpstart aggressive" control efforts to curb the parasitic disease and Mozambique is one of the target countries.

Source: The Hindu.

### **4 new frog species found in Northeast after 14-year study**

An Indian and British team of biologists have discovered four new species of horned frogs in the Northeast, ending a 15-year confusion on the amphibians' nomenclature.

This has been the result of a 14-year study that was a joint effort by Delhi University, University College Dublin, Ireland, and Natural History Museum (UK). The study was published recently as a monograph in the scientific journal Zootaxa.

The study found that Jerdon's white-lipped horned frog is not as wide ranging as previously thought. It is restricted to a few recently discovered populations in Nagaland and Manipur, and near Sohra (Cherrapunjee) in Meghalaya where it was first discovered in 1870 .

The four new species discovered have been named as the following:

- Himalayan horned frog (*Megophrys himalayana*),
- Garo white-lipped horned frog (*Megophrys oreocrypta*)
- Yellow spotted white-lipped horned frog (*Megophrys flavipunctata*)
- Giant Himalayan horned frog (*Megophrys periosa*)

They are named horned frogs because of the fleshy horn-like projection on the upper eyelids. They are genetically distinct and are found in different regions. The smallest among the four forest dwelling frogs is the Yellow spotted white-lipped horned frog (5.7–7.5 cm) while the largest is the Giant Himalayan horned frog (7.1–11.2 cm), making the latter the largest out of the 15 horned frog species now known to occur in Northeast India.

The implication of this study is that all remaining frog populations throughout Asia could represent unique new species that are yet to be named. Northeast India is rich in amphibian diversity but despite being part of two globally recognised biodiversity hotspots (Himalayas and Indo-Burma). Globally there are 80 known species of horned frogs including 15 found in India.



Source: The Hindu.

## **EoDB Grand Challenge**

The objective of this challenge is to invite innovative ideas based on Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, Blockchain and other cutting edge technology to reform Government processes.

The aim is to make India a 5 trillion dollar economy in the shortest possible time. The platform for the Grand Challenge is the Startup India Portal.

Improving EoDB in India: India's EoDB rank has improved by 65 spots in past few years.

India now ranks first in South Asia, and is just some steps away from the Top 50 target. The Prime Minister said that the Union Government has laid stress on Policy Driven Governance and Predictable Transparent Policies. In the last four years, more than 1400 archaic laws have been repealed. Dramatic reductions have been achieved in areas such as time taken for resolution of commercial disputes, and time taken for clearing imported goods.

Organizations such as IMF and Moody's appear confident and optimistic about India's future.

Source: PIB.

## **AirSewa 2.0**

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the upgraded version of AirSewa 2.0 web portal and mobile app.

A need was felt for development of an upgraded version of AirSewa to provide a superior user experience with enhanced functionalities.

Major improvements include features such as secure sign-up and log-in with social media, chatbot for travellers support, improved grievance management including social media grievances, real-time flight status and details flight schedule. The upgrade and improved version of AirSewa operates through an interactive web portal as well as through a mobile app for both android and iOS platforms.

Features of the Portal: It will offer passengers a convenient and hassle-free air travel experience. The web portal and application will help to capture air travellers' feedback for policy interventions. The focus is on improving the quality of services so that passengers who are travelling have a safe and comfortable experience.

Source: PIB.

## **Editorial**

To read

Gender of justice

## Gender sensitisation of the judiciary and appointing more female judges is imperative

Conservative and progressive elements tend to coincide in judicial discourse. The Supreme Court has recently passed certain key judgments to safeguard the rights of women. It abolished triple talaq, upheld women's autonomy, while declaring the law on adultery unconstitutional, and ruled that the bar on women's entry to the Sabarimala temple is illegal. But the judiciary has also been a purveyor of sexist notions — at times, perhaps inadvertently. Victim-blaming by the courts lends credence to certain stereotypes, and such responses go on to influence the entire criminal justice system. Last year, for example, the Punjab and Haryana High Court made a few gender-insensitive comments while hearing a rape case involving students of a private university in Sonapat.

In Mahmood Farooqui, the Delhi High Court's recourse to stereotypes received a lot of flak. The court asserted that it did not want to cast the victim as an ideal "archaic stereotype". But then it also talked of the "academic proficiency" of the parties involved in the case and averred that a "feeble no" by a woman could mean a "yes". In a study conducted by researchers of the National Law University, Delhi, 50 rape case judgments of the Supreme Court were analysed to understand how the court tends to perpetuate gendered opinions. The researchers also tried to understand if the court evaluates victims in a stereotypical manner. These include how a rape survivor would or ought to react, what a perpetrator would do after the rape and whether a sexually active victim would make a false rape accusation.

It was observed that judges often have a stereotypical image of a rape victim. The researchers found that the judges betrayed sexist notions of gender roles, showed a tendency to use insensitive language and made comments that undermined the seriousness of the incident. Certain judgments did have sensitive comments that broke gender stereotypes and rape myths. However, such verdicts were very few.

The study revealed that the insensitivity of the judiciary manifests in different ways. At times, the court expects a typical reaction from a woman who has been raped, even though studies indicate that there are no "typical" reactions. In *Raja v. State of Karnataka (2016)*, the Court overturned the conviction of three persons accused of raping a domestic worker in Bengaluru, since it found merit in the defence's argument that the victim was a prostitute who was falsely accusing the accused. The court observed: "(the victim's) post-incident conduct and movements are noticeably unusual. Instead of hurrying back home in a distressed, humiliated and a devastated state, she stayed back in and around the place of occurrence, enquired about the same from persons whom she claims to have met in the late hours of night. Her confident movements alone past midnight, in that state, are also out of the ordinary. The medical opinion that she was accustomed to sexual intercourse when admittedly she was living separately from her husband for a year-and-a-half before the incident also has its own implication."

In *Sudhanshu Sekhar v. State of Orissa (2002)*, the judges did not believe the victim and acquitted the accused by holding, "though the past conduct of the prosecutrix is an irrelevant matter, in the instant case, (the prosecutrix) asserted that she was a virgin until the alleged incident, but the evidence supported by her physical features revealed that she was habituated to sex. All factors cast a serious doubt on the prosecution case". At times, judges inadvertently undermine the seriousness of a traumatic incident. For example, in *Vinod Kumar v State of Kerala (2014)*, the court overturned the conviction of a married man who was accused of raping a 20-year-old on the pretext of marriage. It then hoped that "his wife would find in herself the fortitude to forgive so that their family may be united again and may rediscover happiness".

The study came out with four significant findings. First, was a sharp increase in gender insensitive comments in cases where the woman was sexually active. Sexist comments were made in 52.3 per cent of the cases which involved a sexually-active victim. Second, the presence of a female judge on the bench led to a sharp decline in sexist comments. There was no female judge in 44.4 per cent of the cases where the bench made a sexist comment. But only 14.2 percent of the benches with a female judge made a sexist comment. Third, conviction was overturned in 80 per cent of the cases in which the bench made gender insensitive comments. Fourth, gender insensitive comments have declined with significant amendments in law. While all the cases studied prior to 2003 had gender insensitive comments, only 15.1 per cent of the judgments after the 2013 criminal law amendment carried such comments.

Rape victims are subjected to institutional sexism that begins with their treatment by the police, continues through a male-dominated judiciary influenced by notions of victim blaming and ends in the acquittal of many alleged rapists. The solution lies in initiating conversations amongst those who are entrusted with setting the tone of public discourse.

Gender sensitisation of the judiciary and appointing more female judges is imperative.

### **Mains Question**

**Q: Large number of vacancies in lower courts is one of the important reasons behind the burgeoning burden of pending cases. Comment.**