

Black Death

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In news— New study has claimed that the **Black Death disease originated in modern day northern Kyrgyzstan around 1338-1339** nearly 7-8 years before it ravaged large parts of the world.

History of Black Death

- The **Black Death was a bubonic plague pandemic that occurred in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East from 1346 to 1353.**
- It is the **most fatal pandemic recorded in human history**, causing the death of 75–200 million people, peaking in Europe from 1351.
- **It is commonly believed that the term Black Death gets its name from the black marks** that appeared on some of the plague victims' bodies.
- However, historians argued that this term, which only emerged centuries later, had less to do with the disease's clinical symptoms, and more to do with how European writers from the 19th century onwards understood the epidemic.
- **In the 14th century, the epidemic was referred to as the 'great pestilence' or 'great death'**, due to the demographic havoc that it caused.
- The Black Death also led to an increase in religious persecution of the Jews, who were blamed for spreading the contagion.
- Most scholars agree that the Black Death **was caused by bacterium *Yersinia pestis* and was spread by fleas** that were **carried by rodent hosts.**
- It can also take a secondary form where it is **spread person-to-person contact via aerosols** causing pneumonic plagues.
- Contemporaries who wrote about the epidemic, often described the buboes (hard, inflamed lymph nodes) as the

distinguishing clinical feature.

- **Matteo Villani, the Florentine chronicler, referred to the disease in 1348** as the 'mortal disease of buboes' and '**pestilence of buboes**'.
- **The onset of symptoms was followed by intense fever and vomiting of blood.**
- After the initial infection, most victims died within 2-7 days.

Significance of the new discovery-

- **The geographical origin point of the plague has been debated for centuries.**
- **Some historians have argued that the plague originated in China**, and spread across Europe by Italian merchants who first entered the continent in trading caravans through Crimea.
- **According to another contested theory based on a 1348 memoir of an Italian notary from Piacenza**, it has been argued Mongol army hurled plague-infested bodies into the city during the siege of Caffa (Crimea) and led to spread of the disease.
- **Historian Mary Fissel said that if the latest research is correct, it would mean that the plague spread through trading routes** and not, as some historians have argued, through warfare a century prior.