

## **Malaysia Still on Alert against Zika Virus**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 7 (Bernama) -- Tourists, especially pregnant women from 24 countries affected by the Zika virus, are urged to report voluntarily to the medical officer at all the major entry points in Malaysia, to get advice or appropriate monitoring.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said those travelling from these countries should voluntarily do so as health screenings were not sufficient to detect the Zika virus.

He said, usually if a person had a body temperature of more than 37 degrees Celcius, the colour scale on the thermo scanner would change, thus making it easy for the medical officer to determine if a person was in good health or not.

"However, with the Zika virus, the screening for body temperature is not enough as 80 per cent of them may have the virus in their body but their temperature does not rise, so they can just go through without being detected," he told reporters after closing the Selangor Indian women small entrepreneurs' gathering, here, Sunday.

Countries which have been confirmed to be affected by the virus so far are Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Surinam, Virgin Islands and Venezuela.

On a report by a health institute in Brazil which said the virus could be spread through saliva and urine, Dr S. Subramaniam said this was still not scientifically proven.

He said based on verified information so far, the virus was from mosquitoes.

"The message which we get now is more towards mosquitoes....but if human-to- human (infection), we need more cases to be studied by scientists before we can say it (saliva or urine) is the source," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak recently instructed the Health Ministry to take all preventive measures to protect the public from the dengue fever and Zika virus.

He wanted all parties including government agencies, non-governmental bodies and the public in general to work together to fight the Aedes mosquito, the vector for both diseases.

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