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By Annie Freeda Cruz

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry has issued an alert in view of the worsening dengue situation in the country.
The ministry's director-general, Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican, said the decision was made during a closed-door meeting between him and all state and district health directors on Wednesday.

Seven measures are to be carried out immediately. They are:

- to strengthen public health activities to ascertain cleanliness, destroy all aedes mosquito breeding sites and communicate on the risks involved if bitten by an Aedes mosquito;
- to further intensify the role and cooperation of doctors in the diagnosis and reporting of dengue cases;
- to strengthen the management of dengue cases in hospitals by special dengue treatment teams;
- all states and districts to monitor and adhere to the dengue control Key Performance Indicators which have been determined;
- to take immediate and efficient action on all dengue cases reported;
- to intensify enforcement activities on aedes breeding premises and also on doctors who fail to report dengue cases; and
- prevention and control of dengue is the responsibility of everybody and the ministry will continue its war against dengue.

Stating that the current dengue situation was serious, Dr Ismail said within just one week between Feb 21 and Feb 27, there were six deaths due to dengue haemorrhagic fever.

This was against 1,121 cases reported nationwide compared with 935 cases and two deaths the previous week.

Between Jan 1 and Feb 27, a total of 8,349 dengue cases with 31 deaths was reported as compared with 9,937 cases and 28 deaths during the same period last year.

Dr Ismail also said six states showed a very high increase in cases, namely Penang, Sarawak, Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Malacca as well as the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

"Our death rate this year is much higher than last year and this is truly worrying."

On the latest death cases, he said, all of them were from areas with very high aedes index, that is between 1.3 and 15 per cent.

"If people in these areas do not clean up their premises and surroundings, there will be more fatalities," warned Dr Ismail.

"I appeal to the rakyat not to take dengue lightly as the situation is serious and the ministry needs the cooperation of each and every citizen to keep their surroundings clean.

"They must destroy all potential aedes breeding sites.
Without public cooperation, we cannot fight the disease.
Please cooperate with the health authorities in gotong-royong," he added.

He also urged those suffering from fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pain and rashes to seek immediate medical help as there were no specific antiviral medicines for dengue.

"Most dengue victims died because they sought treatment late," said Dr Ismail

The symptoms for dengue haemorrhagic are fever, abdominal pain, vomiting and bleeding.

Dr Ismail said early clinical diagnosis and careful clinical management by physicians and nurses would increase survival of patients.

Doctors have been urged to diagnose patients with dengue and manage the cases using the Clinical Practice Guidelines Management of Dengue Infection.

For more information, surf the ministry's website at www.moh.gov.my/.

Disease on the rise, alert issued

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