

PRIME NEWS

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# 137 from Pos Kemas down with malaria

**OUTBREAK:** Blood tests return positive results; 2-week treatment ongoing

**NURADZIMAH DAIM  
AND RIZALMAN HAMMIM**  
SEGAMAT  
news@nst.com.my

THE 137 people from Pos Kemas in Grik, Hulu Perak, who were detected with malaria, have undergone blood tests, which confirmed that they are carrying the malaria parasite.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said health personnel conducted blood tests on more than 4,000 people from 17 villages in Grik and the surrounding areas as a preventive measure, following previous cases of malaria.

He said despite the patients not showing symptoms of malaria, they were susceptible to it if they came in

the control measures have failed.

"No, that is not the case. In fact, the number of cases has increased because we are actively searching for those who may have (contracted the parasite), which is part of the control measures."

In **Putrajaya**, Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the 137 people from Pos Kemas who were down with malaria comprised 72 male and 65 female patients, including 79 children who were below 14.

"All the patients were carrying the *Plasmodium vivax* strain, except for one case of *Plasmodium falciparum*."

He said Pos Kemas was declared a malaria-free zone as the disease had not been reported there in the past three years.

"However, since malaria cases have been reported since Nov 16, a mass blood survey was conducted to combat the spread of the disease."

Dr Noor Hisham said as of Wednesday, 724 houses in Pos Kemas had been sprayed with residual spray.

sible for ensuring that their foreign workers have been screened.

"This is to detect symptoms of malaria and to prevent the spread of diseases."

It was reported that on Nov 16, three Pos Kemas residents had tested positive for malaria, with the number of cases increasing afterwards.

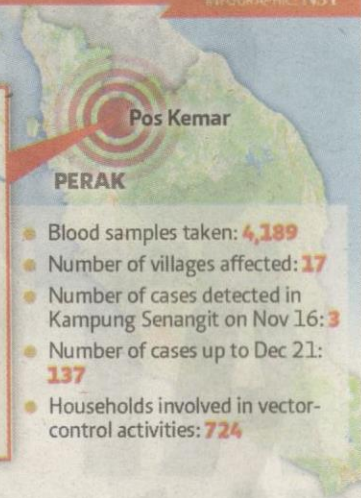
Health authorities later implemented countermeasures to curb the spread of the disease, following an outbreak at the Pos Kemas Orang Asli settlement.

In **Ipoh**, the Department of Orang Asli Development (Jako); said its staff had been stationed at the settlement's entry point to ensure that only residents were allowed in and out.

"We do not allow outsiders to enter as there is a chance that the disease could be transferred out of the area.

"We have 15 staff members at our Sungai Siput office who are on 24-hour standby," said the department's director-general, Mohd Ja-

## Malaria in Pos Kemas



- Blood samples taken: **4,189**
- Number of villages affected: **17**
- Number of cases detected in Kampung Senangit on Nov 16: **3**
- Number of cases up to Dec 21: **137**
- Households involved in vector-control activities: **724**

**MALARIA**

- TYPE:** mosquito-borne infectious disease
- TRANSMISSION:** Via infected female *Anopheles* mosquito's saliva in a person's blood
- CAUSE:** Parasitic protozoans
- TIME FRAME:** 10 to 15 days after being bitten
- NORMAL SYMPTOMS:** Fever, fatigue, vomiting, headache
- SEVERE SYMPTOMS:** Yellow skin, seizure, coma
- PREVENTION:** Mosquito nets, insect repellents, insecticides
- TREATMENT:** Antimalarial medication
- HIGH-RISK GROUPS:** Children, pregnant women

malludin Kasbi.

He said there were 15 malaria patients being treated at Kuala

Kangsar and Sungai Siput Hospitals. Additional reporting by Hashini Kavishtr Kannan

contact with mosquitoes, which are carriers of the disease.

"Health personnel have checked residents in all Orang Asli villages in the area.

"Those who tested positive have been traced.

"They are receiving treatment for two weeks to remove the parasite from their blood."

"Following the treatment, they will be considered not at risk of spreading the disease," said Dr Subramaniam after handing over aid and equipment to 46 participants of the IAZAM poverty eradication programme in Taman Yayasan Balai Raya here yesterday.

He denied that the number of people down with malaria showed that control measures were ineffective.

"When the number of cases increases, it gives the impression that

He said the villagers were also provided with mosquito nets.

"We have conducted controlling activities, including larviciding, to prevent the breeding of the *Anopheles* mosquito."

He said as Pos Kemar had been declared a malaria-free zone, the disease might have been brought into the area by people who had been infected in other places.

Dr Noor Hisham said the state Health Department had carried out blood screening on 71 foreigners involved in a construction project in Pos Kemar.

All the tests returned negative results.

However, he did not rule out the possibility that the cause of the disease's spread may be the big number of foreign workers in the area.

"Employers are the ones respon-



Health personnel **destroying mosquito breeding grounds and carrying out larviciding** in Pos Kemar, Griki last month. Pic courtesy of Perak Health Department