

Malaysia plans to vaccinate overseas visitors to combat polio

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will vaccinate overseas visitors in the country in a bid to prevent the proliferation of infectious diseases, state news agency Bernama reported, citing Ministry of Health Director-General Noor Hisham Abdullah.

The health ministry will seek cooperation from Unicef to get subsidised vaccine supplies and plans to work with the Philippines to secure less expensive treatments, Bernama reported Noor Hisham as saying.

Some 20% to 30% of overseas visitors, especially in the East Malaysians state of Sabah and Sarawak, enter the country without screening, raising concerns about their vaccination status, according to the report.

Malaysia confirmed on December 6, 2019, its first case of polio in almost three decades, sparking fears that the disease is spreading across the region after the Philippines declared an epidemic in September.

A test by the World Health Organization (WHO) found that the virus, detected in a three-month-old boy in Sabah, is linked to the one found in the Philippines.

The South-East Asian country is now embarking on an aggressive immunisation drive to prevent the virus from spreading further, and the health ministry has issued public notices to encourage parents to inoculate their children.

The ministry also plans to give additional vaccinations to all children below the age of five in Sabah, Noor Hisham said.

The Academy of Medicine Malaysia says vaccinations should be mandatory and that sanctions should be imposed for unreasonable non-compliance, Malaysian media houses reported. –

Agencies, December 15, 2019

Read more at <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2019/12/15/malaysia-plans-to-vaccinate-overseas-visitors-to-combat-polio#oBDX2zXXjfHfrAQ.99>