

Arresting the risk of dengue virus

Wolbachia bacteria-carrying mosquitoes to be released nationwide in stages

KUALA LUMPUR: Aedes mosquitoes carrying the Wolbachia bacteria will be released nationwide in stages, says Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad. The Health Minister said the method could bring down the population of mosquitoes carrying the dengue virus.

He said under the first phase of the project, Aedes mosquitoes injected with the Wolbachia bacteria were released in the Petaling district

and Kuala Lumpur.

"The presence of the Wolbachia bacteria in the Aedes mosquitoes will retard the development of the dengue virus in mosquitoes and lower the risk of virus infections in humans.

"Based on the outcome of the project and the allocation provided, the release of the Aedes mosquitoes that contain the Wolbachia bacteria will be done nationwide in stages,"

he said when answering a question from Nor Azrina Surip (PH-Merbok) yesterday.

Dr Dzulkefly said studies by the Institute of Medical Research Malaysia revealed that the method had brought down dengue cases in the two localities by between 50% and 70%.

He also said a total of 154 people had died due to dengue as at Oct 26, which was a 48.1% rise in the num-

ber of fatalities compared to the same period last year, where 104 deaths were recorded.

"There were 108,606 cases compared to 61,254 cases for the same period last year.

"This is a 77.3% rise or an increase of 47,352 cases," he said.

Dr Dzulkefly said Selangor recorded 60,024 dengue cases followed by the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya with 13,435,

Johor (9,194), Kelantan (5,024), Sabah (4,444) and Penang (3,804).

He added that nine other states recorded less than 3,000 dengue cases respectively.

"The rise in the number of dengue cases is not happening only in Malaysia as there is a one to eight-fold increase in other countries such as Singapore, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China and Taiwan," he said.