

Man dies in Malaysia's first locally transmitted Zika case

September 3 2016

Malaysia reported its first locally transmitted Zika case on Saturday, a 61-year-old man who has died of heart-related complications, the government said.

The patient was a resident of the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah, the Ministry of Health said, and already was in fragile health due to heart problems, [high blood pressure](#) and other maladies.

But the case, coming two days after authorities reported the country's first case of Zika, is likely to add to fears of a full-blown outbreak of the mosquito-borne virus in the tropical nation.

The ministry said local transmission was highly likely because the man had no recent history of travelling outside Malaysia.

Ministry Director-general Noor Hisham Abdullah told state news agency Bernama his prior health problems were the cause of death on Saturday afternoon, but that the results of a full investigation were pending.

On Thursday, Malaysia reported the first Zika case on its soil—a 58-year-old woman who is believed to have contracted it on a visit to neighbouring Singapore, where 150 cases have been confirmed.

A study published Friday in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* journal said at least 2.6 billion people could be at risk from the virus in mosquito-ridden parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Zika, which is spread mainly by the Aedes mosquito, has been detected in 67 countries and territories including hard-hit Brazil.

It causes only mild symptoms for most people such as fever and a rash, but infected pregnant women can give birth to babies with microcephaly, a deformation marked by abnormally small brains and heads.

Malaysia already has struggled in recent years to control the spread of Aedes-borne dengue fever.

It has been bracing for Zika after Singapore reported a surge in [cases](#) beginning a week ago.

Malaysia has stepped up screening of travellers from abroad, particularly Singapore, and fogging with mosquito-killing chemicals while urging the public to eliminate mosquito breeding sites such as stagnant water.

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Citation: Man dies in Malaysia's first locally transmitted Zika case (2016, September 3) retrieved 9 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-09-dies-malaysia-locally-transmitted-zika.html>

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