Sao Paulo shuts parks as yellow fever outbreak kills 70

January 23 2018

In this Jan. 16, 2018, file photo, a banner explaining how the yellow fever is transmitted hangs at the entrance of a park in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The World Health Organization says 11 human cases have been confirmed through last week and hundreds more found in monkeys. Sao Paulo closed its zoo and botanical gardens Tuesday, Jan. 23, as a yellow fever outbreak that has led to 70 deaths is picking up steam. (AP Photo/Andre Penner, File)

Sao Paulo closed its zoo and botanical gardens Tuesday as a yellow fever outbreak that has led to 70 deaths is picking up steam.

The big Inhotim art park, which attracts visitors from all over the world, also announced that all visitors would have to show proof of vaccination to be allowed in. The park said the measure was preventative and no case of yellow fever had been found there.

Cases of yellow fever have been rising in Brazil during the Southern Hemisphere summer rainy season, and health officials are planning to vaccinate millions of people in the coming weeks in the hopes of containing the outbreak.

Authorities did not say when the Sao Paulo zoo or nearby botanical gardens would reopen. The zoo said in a statement that a wild monkey was found dead last week in the park that contains the zoo and tests Monday confirmed it was positive for yellow fever.

According to figures put out by each state, 148 cases have been confirmed in the southeastern states of Minas Gerais, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Of those, 69 people have died. A week ago, the Health Ministry had confirmed 34 cases and 19 deaths in those states; it also confirmed one case in the capital district that ended in death.

A boy cries as he receives a vaccine against yellow fever at a public health center in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2018. The World Health Organization announced Tuesday that it now considers all of Sao Paulo state at risk for yellow fever, recommending that all international visitors to the state be vaccinated. (AP Photo/Andre Penner)

Sao Paulo has registered the most cases, with 81, and the World Health Organization recommended last week that foreigners planning to travel anywhere in the state be vaccinated for the mosquito-borne disease. Brazil's own recommendations include only parts of the state.

Much of Brazil is considered at risk for the yellow fever, but last year it saw its largest outbreak of the disease in decades, including in areas not previously thought to be at risk. More than 770 people were infected, and more than 250 died. Minas Gerais was at the epicenter of that outbreak, and it declared a state of emergency last week.

Yellow fever typically causes fever, muscle pain and nausea; some patients also experience the jaundice from which the disease gets its name.

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