

## PRIME NEWS

# 3-day treatment to cure malaria

## FIGHTING THE DISEASE:

Patients only need to take one tablet a day for three days

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**E**ARLY next year, the public can expect a better malaria cure which takes only three days of treatment period.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the current medication takes 14 days, and most patients did not complete their treatment course, stunting the ministry's goal to fight malaria.

"The government is very con-

cerned about wiping out malaria and reducing its rate by 20 per cent yearly," he said after launching the new fixed dose combination of *artesunate mefloquine* in conjunction with the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDI) jubilee celebration here yesterday.

"We believe with the new drug that takes a shorter treatment period, it will be possible to wipe out malaria completely."

In Malaysia, the malaria rate was 18 per 100,000 population, though this would be down to 14 per 100,000 population if foreigners were not included.

Liow said the malaria fatality rate was at 0.35 per cent, with 5,306

cases and 18 deaths last year.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease of humans and other animals caused by protists, a type of microorganism.

A bite from an infected female mosquito will introduce the protists via its saliva into the circulatory system and ultimately to the liver where they will mature and reproduce.

The disease causes symptoms that typically include fever and headache. In severe cases, it can progress to coma or death.

Liow said the new drug would only require patients to take one tablet a day for three days.

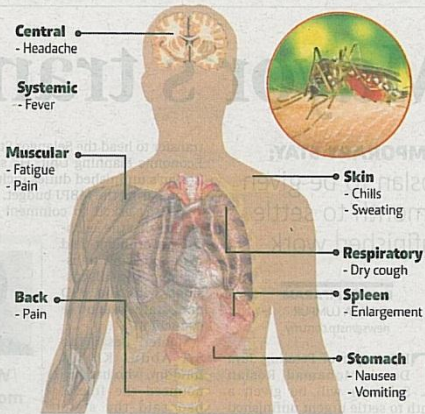
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**Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai**

## Symptoms of malaria

INFOGRAPHIC: NST



longer period, compliance will be compromised.

"Taking the medication half way will not help in the effort to wipe out malaria totally."

Liow said the distribution could also be expedited to help the poor and patients in rural areas.

He added that the ministry had put in place a malaria control plan

at identified hot spots, 60 per cent of which were in Sabah and Sarawak.

The remaining hot spots were rural areas in the peninsula.

Liow said the DNDI aimed at delivering 13 new treatments by 2018, including for paediatric HIV.

"Hopefully, we can see a dengue vaccine by 2014."