

Zero malaria infections in Sri Lanka

BY SHALUKA MANCHANAYAKE AND GAYAN NARANDENIYA

The World Health Organization (WHO) named Sri Lanka as a malaria-free country in 2016. However, not a single case of malaria has been reported in Sri Lanka since 2012.

The country was able to make the number of malaria infections zero by that time as a result of the malaria control programs that have been in place for nearly 100 years. Sri Lanka as well as a large number of other countries has now eradicated malaria.

Thousands

Although Sri Lanka has been able to eradicate the malaria epidemic in recent times, on a number of occasions Sri Lanka had to deal with severe malaria epidemics.

Thousands of patients died and their families were left largely helpless, especially as the health sector in the country was not so advanced decades ago.

This article is about such a dangerous malaria epidemic situation in Sri Lanka, which occurred in the

Malaria is caused by singlecelled microorganisms of the Plasmodium group. It is spread exclu-



sively through bites of infected Anopheles mosquitoe. It causes symptoms that typically include fever, tiredness, vomiting, and headaches. In severe cases, it can cause yellow skin, seizures, coma, or

Symptoms usually begin 10 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. If not properly treated, people may have recurrences of the disease months later. In those who have recently survived an infection, reinfection usually causes milder symptoms

The mosquito bite introduces the parasites from the mosquito's saliva into a person's blood. Most deaths due to malaria are caused by P. falciparum, whereas P. vivax, P. ovale, and P. malariae generally cause a milder form of malaria.

Deaths

The species P. knowlesi rarely causes disease in humans. Malaria is typically diagnosed by the microscopic examination of blood using blood films, or with antigen-based

rapid diagnostic tests. Methods that ia is common due to their cost and (PCR) to detect the parasite's DNA have been developed, but are not

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use the polymerase chain reaction complexity. widely used in areas where malar-

විපනට පත්වූවන්ව ආධාර දිම සඳහා ක කෙරු කමාන්ත පිළිබඳ ්ැමති වරයාට භාරදීම මහරජතුමාගේ තත්රය හැර කුරුතෑගල දිස්තුන්සේ පමණස් පසුගිය දෙමාසයකුළ මරණ 5500 ස් පමණ සිදුව එමේ. මරණ සංඛ්යාව මෙසේයි:— වැරති විල්ලිකක්පත්තුවී දීෂකට පන්වූවන් වේක කටුගම්පොළ කන්පන්තුම් වින්ති හසුපත්තුව දේවීමැදී ආක්වත්තුම් මහරජාණන්වනන්ගේ ඉට් නුවෙන් දමදෙන් හත්පත්තුව රේස් පිදෙන කෘර මහ ලේකම්තුමා ල්රියා වෙන් පිහිත දුවන්ට සහනය උබැදීම සඳහා කම්කරු කර්මාන්ය සින් ලංකාන්වුකැරතුමා වෙන හා වෙළගෙළදාම පිළිබඳ ඇමණවරකාට කවත් රුපියල් 1 00 000 ක් විකර අනුකම්ද සක්කත පණි දෙන උද්දේශ. මර කලින් රු ිගල් අදලසැකක් ද අබෙන බැපැ 1985 ජනවාරි මය පෙකසුරද සිට මහාරෙනස කාරාම්ට ඇතුල් කරනු රාමු රෙනින්නේ සංඛ්යාව අනුවි ඒමෙන බැම් පෙනීයයි. පෙරෙයිද ඇතුල් පරනු ලැමු 12 වෙන් දිනදීම "ඉකුත්වූ යන් කි තිපය මුදුල්ලෙහි වන්නේ ගණන 84 කි. ඊට කලින් ඉරුදින ඇතුල් කරනු ලැබු රෙලින් දිව්සිතේ ඇතැම් කොට්ඨාස පෙළ ගේ ගණන 104 කි. පෙරෙහිද සිදුමු මරණ ගණන 14 කි. මරණ මන් පැතිරයන මැලේරියා වසං සංඛ්යාව පැලිවලයන් වැසියකි පෙනීමයා හමුන් මීට පැලින් දරුදින සිදුමු මරණ ගැන බලන9ව සංඛ්යාව කු වෙනෙන් අවුවේශන ශන බැවි පෙනේ. පැලින් දරුදින පිදුවූ මරණ ගණන 16 කි. ගතන පිළිබඳ නොරතුරු බලවීම් සංමේගයකින් වරික්සා බැල බැ හමුන් නාන්සේර් දනුම් අදන අලස මිතරජාණන් විතන්ගේ පිසින් ⊕ද ''සනියකට නිවේදන දෙකක් පිරිනෙකුර එමේ. විසංගයගේ උතියාදු අදිලේගත ශාලේ උකිණි ාකුත්කළ සුවුසි"

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5,500 ක් මියයාම

මැලේරියා වසංගනය මිළිබඳ හයානක

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SOME VILLAGES HAD BECOME GRAVEYARDS. HE HAD ALSO SEEN BABIES TRYING TO SUCKLE FROM THEIR MOTHERS' BREASTS WITHOUT KNOWING THAT THEIR MOTHER HAD DIED mated that a quarter of the country's

population was infected with malaria at that time.

PERERA SAID THAT HE HAD

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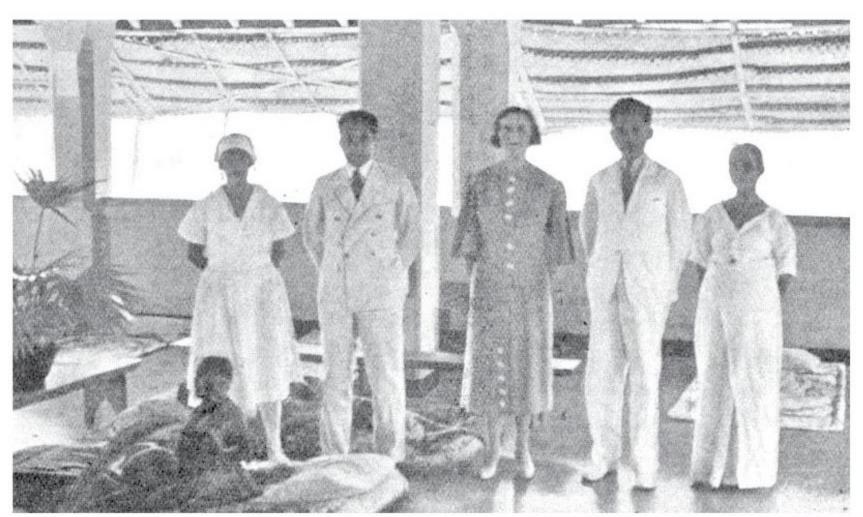
The Government was working hard to provide health care, food, clothing and economic rehabilitation for the people at that time. The then Minister of Home Affairs, Sir D. B. Jayatilaka was given this role and he too was once infected with malaria.

Vulnerable

Members of the Sri Lanka Sooriyamal Movement, led by the late Dr. N.M. Perera had at the time, gone to many areas in the country to find the vulnerable villagers affected by malaria.

Perera said that he had seen a large number of patients who died before him, due to the lack of proper treatment, and that some villages had become graveyards. He had also seen babies trying to suckle from their mothers' breasts without knowing that their mother had died. As he went from village to village carrying things like rice, dhal, marmite, sugar and tea leaves for the malaria patients, Perera was nicknamed Parippu Mama by the villagers.





In 1935 the total population of Sri Lanka was reported to be less than 6 million. It is therefore, esti-

Evidence suggests that malaria

was widespread in Ceylon even in

the 4th century AD. The largest re-

cent malaria epidemic in Sri Lanka

occurred in 1934-35. In these two

years, 1.5 million malaria cases

were reported, killing more than

reached epidemic levels in 1968-

1970, 1974-1976, 1986-1988 and

1991-1993. In 2002, 30 people died of

malaria, but every year since then,

the number of deaths due to malaria

in Sri Lanka was recorded in 2009,

while the last case of malaria was re-

The last death due to malaria

has dropped to less than 10.

ported in October, 2012.

Thereafter, malaria in Sri Lanka

80,000 people.