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Erika Harding
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by Erika Harding

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On April 23, Health Minister Adib Jatene said malaria is rapidly spreading through Amazon region states. Consequently, the government's anti-malaria campaign is a top priority. In 1991, over 500,000 cases of the disease were diagnosed. Jatene said a massive blood testing program at a selected site in the Amazon region indicated that 148 of every 1,000 inhabitants were infected with malaria. Robert Bus, director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Transmissible Agents Control Program, attributed the spread of malaria and yellow fever in Latin America to implementation of large-scale construction and agricultural projects without adequate environmental planning and impact assessment. For example, he said the dam for the Itaipo hydroelectric project allowed malaria to spread from Brazil to Argentina. Luis Hildebranco, a Brazilian malaria researcher for France's Pasteur Institute, said malaria is primarily an "occupational disease," affecting people employed in certain sectors such as mining, construction and agriculture. (Source: Inter Press Service, 04/23/92)

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