

1-06. 017106

'No dengue vaccine available in market'

MOHSIN BABBAR

ISLAMABAD: To run counter to government claims that hospitals have sufficient quantity of medicines and equipment to treat the patients affected by this contagious disease, a pro-consumer group, TheNetwork, releases to the media a report with a declaration that neither any dengue vaccine is available in the local market at the moment nor are the chances of the availability of the same in the next few years.

The group, at the same time, does not subscribe to the health authorities' much-trumpeted assertion that the dengue fever has been contained in the country.

Saying the number of positive dengue cases is on the rise, it lays the blame of the disturbing situation on the combined negligence of public health institutions and municipal bodies along with local governments.

According to the group, the performance of federal and provincial governments has so far remained confined to press statements that claimed that free testing facilities are provided in all cities and fumigation campaigns are being started to stop mosquito breeding etc. "The ground realities suggest otherwise, however," maintained TheNetwork, in its consumer report, released on Saturday.

"The dengue outbreak is not merely a problem of public health and rather, it is an issue of health and sanitation and even good governance. The way, our municipal and local bodies and development authorities encourage mosquito breeding through negligence, is resulting in malaria and dengue outbreaks. All the places, where sanitation is poor are prone to dengue epidemic.

"The cleaning of thousands of garbage heaps all over the country along with effective, proper and timely fumigation besides reforming the sanitation and sewerage system is the need of the hour", it said.

However, it is a huge test of district governments, well-equipped municipal and development authorities with a bulk of human and financial capital. All they need is a political will," it observes.

Keeping in mind the aggravating situation in Karachi, the administration of other cities should have taken appropriate measures to cope with possible Karachi-like situation but nothing was done and the disease spread in various other cities of interior Sindh and Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Peshawar in north. Although dengue does occur in only tropical areas, the passengers carrying dengue virus, probably, helped bring this disease to cities like Islamabad and Peshawar.

According to TheNetwork, there are

Dengue to end in 7 months: minister

JAMILA ACHAKZAI

ISLAMABAD: Asserting the situation, emerged after the outbreak of dengue fever mostly in urban parts of Sindh, is under control, the federal health minister, Muhammad Naseer Khan, on Saturday insisted it would take some six to seven months to free the country completely from the disease transmitted to human beings by mosquito.

The minister, while talking to the pressmen in Islamabad, put the number of patients, tested positive by National Institute of Health (NIH) for dengue so far, at 905 and said they were being treated free of cost at government hospitals.

As for the dengue fever suspects, he said the government hospitals admitted until Saturday 2,786 persons with the

symptoms similar to the dengue fever.

The minister described Sindh as worst hit area by the dengue epidemic, saying the number of confirmed and suspected cases of the disease from the province were 733 and 2,142, respectively. According to him, the dengue fever had claimed 32 lives, thus far in Sindh where Jamshoro and Karachi were affected by the disease most. In Karachi alone, 900 suspected cases have been reported so far, he informed the reporters.

As for Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the minister claimed only 190 persons, suspected to be suffering from dengue, are currently admitted in twin city hospitals.

Though apparently contradictory to the independent estimates, the minister claimed the number of positive dengue cases in twin cities was 74.

complaints in Karachi and other cities that Rs 700 to 800 are being charged to a patient to carry out blood tests in public sector hospitals. "It is very much unfortunate that people in power corridors don't think beyond federal capital that's why there seem no precautionary measures or preparation to face the possible outbreak of this deadly disease in the cities, where dengue cases have not yet been reported, like Lahore," it says.

Moreover, it said the excessive and irrational use of antibiotics and antiviral medicines in Pakistan had made the viruses and bacteria more resistant

against medicines and diseases like dengue had turned into epidemics.

Also there came information from the pro-consumer group that the dengue fever infects more than 50 million people annually, most of them children, worldwide during or after monsoon, mainly in the populous cities of tropical areas. In this part of the world, India was the first victim of this disease where ten thousand people got infected and 80 died so far.

The second wave of dengue fever in Pakistan came in Karachi in October this year, where, according to official statis-

tics, the number of people with dengue infection crossed 500 by the end of the same month. However, press reports put this number much higher.

Report says that the populous coastal cities of tropical areas are more prone to dengue since dengue virus carrying mosquito breeds in clean water of water supply pipes and in the backyards and plant vases in homes. However, forested villages also provide breeding facilities to dengue carrying mosquito and therefore, dengue cases, though rarely, can be witnessed in such villages as well, the report said.