

Only lab tests can confirm chikungunya infection

PETALING JAYA: You get bitten by a mosquito and days later, there is a sudden onset of fever, muscle pain, headache and rash.

While one may assume it is a dengue infection, there is also debilitating joint pain that lasts for days.

Chikungunya – a similar mosquito-borne infection – could be the reason for the discomfort in the joints throughout your body.

“Both dengue and chikungunya have almost identical symptoms such as sudden high fever, headache, rash and muscle aches.

“However, chikungunya is more often associated with severe, sometimes debilitating joint pain and swelling, which can last weeks to months.

“Dengue is more likely to cause bleeding manifestations, low platelet counts and in severe cases, shock,” said Universiti Putra Malaysia consultant clinical microbiologist Prof Dr Zamberi Sekawi.

He said laboratory tests are needed for confirmation, noting

that symptoms alone may not be definitive.

While chikungunya is not new in Malaysia, he voiced concerns over cross-border transmission.

“Early detection is possible through clinical suspicion and rapid laboratory confirmation in travellers returning from affected areas showing fever and joint pain symptoms,” he said.

Universiti Malaya virologist Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said it is difficult to determine whether the illness is due to chikungunya or dengue infection, just based on symptoms.

“Testing is essential as dengue can be deadly.

“Chikungunya, meanwhile, can be debilitating,” he said.

He also said the virus will most likely be carried by the Aedes mosquito, which is the same as dengue.

Dr Sazaly said the high volume of travel and short-travel distance between Malaysia and afflicted regions like China means a virae-mic person can possibly carry the virus here.



Constant vigilance: A worker fogging parts of Alor Setar as a preventive measure against mosquitoes.