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Sarawak Biodiversity Centre to host talk on malaria April 26



Prof Balbir Singh

KUCHING: Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) will host a talk entitled 'The M&Ms — Malaria, Man, Monkeys and Mosquitoes' on April 26.

It will be held at SBC's premises at KM20, Jalan Borneo Heights, Semengoh from 2.30pm.

Prof Balbir Singh, from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), will describe the work that led to the discovery of a large number of human Plasmodium knowlesi malaria infections in Kapit Division, followed by a brief history of the parasite, and description of studies on malaria parasites in macaques.

He will also share his team's experiences in carrying out research in the forests of Sarawak with monkeys, mosquitoes and man.

Balbir received his tertiary education from the University of Liverpool, in the United Kingdom.

In 1984, he obtained his PhD in Immunology and Microbiology from the same university, after which he was attached to the Wolfson Unit of Molecular Genetics and Department of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine as a medical fellow.

Upon his return to Malaysia, he lectured at Universiti Sains Malaysia's School of Medical Sciences before joining Unimas in 1999.

He has been director of the Malaria Research Centre at Unimas since 2006.

Balbir's group work on malaria is largely significant in the field of medical research with regards to malaria in humans, which was initially thought to be caused by four species of Plasmodium.

The research team had discovered that large number of human cases in Malaysia with the monkey malaria parasite.

With the discovery, Balbir has published in leading international journals, including The Lancet and Clinical Infectious Diseases.

He has also been invited to give keynote addresses and talks at international conferences around the world, and has served as an advisor for the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Last year, he was selected by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia as one of the 27 Top Research Scientists in Malaysia.

Balbir's knowlesi malaria research has received extensive press attention from leading broadcasters including the BBC, Reuters and Bloomberg.

His team's research on Plasmodium knowlesi malaria was also featured in a television documentary aired by Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 2009.

The documentary entitled 'Monkey Malaria' won the award for the Best Documentary in the field of Health and Health Sciences at the 2009 Excellence in Health Journalism Awards run by the National Press Club of Australia.

Balbir's group research on knowlesi malaria has impacted on the way patients with this potentially fatal infection are treated and managed, particularly in Sarawak and Sabah.

Call Asha Kaushal or Ha-Mim Marzuki on 082-610610 to register for the talk.

Alternatively email names and contact numbers to biosar@sbc.org.my.

Source: **The Borneopost**