

Zika Virus: Rio Authorities Announce Pre Olympic Clean Up



Rio de Janeiro, February 1 (RHC-teleSUR) -- In the run up to the 2016 Olympic Games, Rio de Janeiro authorities have announced plans to prevent the spread of the Zika virus.

There is growing concern in Brazil and abroad that The games, set to begin on Aug. 5, could take place amidst a possible outbreak of the Zika virus.

Authorities will start inspecting Olympic facilities four months before the games to destroy mosquito breeding grounds and they will also conduct daily checks during the tournament.

The Brazilian health ministry says it is hopeful that the spread of the virus will be slowed down because the games are taking place in the cooler, drier month of August when there are less mosquitoes and fewer cases of mosquito borne viruses.

Health experts in Brazil have also warned that this year's carnival could acceleratethe spread of the Zika virus.

Millions of tourists will descend on some of the country's most severely hit cities such as Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, early February, the middle of the southern hemisphere summer, the peak breeding season for mosquitoes.

The Zika virus is contracted through the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is also known to carry dengue, yellow fever and Chikungunya viruses. Zika has spread across the Americas with health officials in El Salvador advising women to delay pregnancy until 2018 amid fears that the infection causes birth defects in newborns.

The virus is suspected to cause a rare brain defect in babies, known as microcephaly, which causes abnormally small heads, leading to severe developmental issues, brain damage and sometimes death.

teleSUR reported Wednesday that Brazil's Ministry of Health revised its figures of microcephaly in newborns to 3,893 since authorities began investigating the surge in October. Previous estimates said there were 3,500 recorded microcephaly cases.

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