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ASIA EDITION

WHO certifies Belize in Central America as malaria-free

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Belize is the third country to be awarded a malaria-free status in 2023



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has certified Belize as malaria-free, following the country's over 70 years of continued efforts to stamp out the disease.

With this announcement, a total of 42 countries and 1 territory have been certified as malaria-free by WHO, including 11 countries in the Region of the Americas.

Following the achievement of Paraguay, Argentina, and El Salvador, Belize becomes the fourth country in the Americas and the second in Central America to be certified as free of malaria over the last 5 years.

Over the last 3 decades, Belize has achieved a dramatic reduction in its malaria burden – from a peak of about 10 000 cases in 1994 to zero indigenous cases in 2019. Belize's success has hinged on strong surveillance for malaria, access to diagnosis, and effective vector control methods including insecticide-treated mosquito nets and indoor spraying of insecticides. Trained community health workers have played a vital role in timely diagnosis and treatment.

In 2015, Belize reoriented its malaria programme to place a greater focus on enhanced surveillance among high-risk populations, allowing for strategic targeting of interventions and available resources in priority areas. Belize maintained malaria surveillance efforts during the COVID- 19 pandemic and made efforts to integrate malaria and COVID-19 surveillance systems.

Belize is the third country to be awarded a malaria-free status in 2023, following the certifications of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan in March.