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Malaria havoc: Cure in sight

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Singapore: Health experts warned that drug resistant malarial parasites have established a strong foothold in Southeast Asia, seriously threatening global efforts to control and eliminate the disease.

Scientists indicated that blood samples taken from 1,241 malaria patients had parasites which are resistant to the frontline drug artemisinin.

Experts revealed that these resistant parasites have spread to border areas in western and northern Cambodia, eastern Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. WHO cautioned that if the resistant parasite managed to spread across geographies, all the progress made in the elimination of the fatal disease so far, would be reversed.

As malaria continues to wreak havoc scientists across the globe are mushrooming to develop novel methods for prevention and cure. Pharma giant Glaxosmithkline announced that, following sucessful clinical trials of the first-ever malaria vaccine, the firm has applied for its regulatory approval.

GSK conducted the research for the novel vaccine, in cooperation with a nonprofit organization Path Malaria Vaccine Initiative. The study received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The clinical findings by the firm revealed that children retained protection upto 18 months after being injected. Mr Sanjeev Krishna, professor of molecular parasitology and medicine at St George's, University of London said, "This is a break-through discovery, promising a vaccine for the blood borne illness to be available by next year."