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Chua-Medicine

DEVELOP INTEGRATED TRADITIONAL MEDICINE INDUSTRY, SAYS CHUA

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia should develop an integrated traditional medicine industry to enable resulting products to be used in tandem with modern medicine at local hospitals or exported abroad, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today.

He said the local pharmaceutical industry was encouraged to tap the country's bountiful plants and herbs and help reduce the amount of traditional or so-called "Oriental" medicine imported yearly from countries like China, India and Indonesia.

"The plants and herbs are there...it's a matter of collecting them, doing research, manufacture and sell the products," he told reporters after launching the MIGHT Interest Group (MIG) on Pharmaceutical here.

MIGHT, or the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology, was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1993 with the objective of identifying business and investment opportunities for industries.

Chua said the yearly sales turnover for traditional medicine in the country amounted to about RM2 billion with the products sold ranging from general health products to herbal remedies and tonics.

Chua said medicinal plants could be cultivated in herbarium, as done in China and South Korea, to ensure a ready supply of raw material for traditional medicine production.

Earlier, in his speech, he said efforts to attract multinational pharmaceutical companies into the country should be undertaken to promote the growth of the local pharmaceutical industry.

Apart from setting up a pharmaceutical research institute or centre, Chua said the local industry should establish research and development programmes with foreign companies and local academia to search for novel drug molecules from local plants.

He also said the Drug Control Authority had licensed 62 manufacturers (including four manufacturers of traditional medicines), 142 importers and 496 wholesalers of registered pharmaceutical products.

The total number of pharmaceutical products registered with the DCA is 12,283. Of these, 6,864 are prescription products, 4,151 non-prescription items, 1,073 traditional medicines and 195 hairdyes.

Chua said the local pharmaceutical market value last year, not including the sale of traditional medicines, stood at RM900 million.

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