

28 JUN 2001

Suleiman-HIV

M'SIA DISAPPOINTED WITH BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE DRUGS FOR HIV

KUALA LUMPUR, June 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has reiterated its disappointment at existing barriers which are preventing the majority of HIV infected individuals from obtaining equitable and affordable life-prolonging drugs.

Deputy Minister of Health Datuk Dr Suleiman Mohamad said access to these drugs should not be restricted by trade and patent related issues.

"This inequality is unjust and inhumane," Dr Suleiman said in his speech delivered at the United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/Aids in New York, yesterday.

The text of his speech was faxed to Bernama through Wisma Putra today.

Dr Suleiman said Malaysia hoped the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/Aids to be issued at the end of the special session, would address the inequality so that deaths resulting from Aids and its impact on families and societies can be lessened.

He said although Malaysia was in agreement with much of the Declaration of Commitment, it was disappointed at the very low profile given to Asia and the Pacific where 60 per cent of the world's population lived.

"While recognising the magnitude of the African problem, the impending epidemic in Asia and the Pacific will far surpass anything previously seen if nothing is done today.

"It is our hope that the proposed Global Health and Aids Fund will be appropriately apportioned to ensure that this future disaster will be averted," he said.

Dr Sulaiman said Asean Heads of Government would be meeting in Brunei November this year on the initiative of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to jointly address region-specific HIV/Aids issues.

"We hope such commitment at the highest political level will provide leadership within our countries and in the region. This, we trust, will illustrate what can be achieved when countries work together to address an issue of mutual concern," he added.

More than 40,000 cases of HIV/ Aids have been reported in Malaysia since 1986 and of these, almost 4,000 have died. In recent years, about 4,000 people are infected with the diseases annually.

-- BERNAMA

ZAI AFY DVS