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Soldiers-Aids

SOLDIERS UNDERGO COMPREHENSIVE CHECK-UPS ONCE IN FOUR YEARS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 6 (Bernama) -- Armed forces personnel have to undergo compulsory comprehensive medical check-ups once every four years to ensure that they are free from diseases, including HIV/Aids.

Its Health Services Director Brig Jen Dr Abdul Razak Yusoff said apart from the scheduled check-ups, soldiers were also required to be screened for diseases before they were sent overseas for courses.

"For example, if they have undergone screening in the fourth year and during their sixth year they are supposed to go overseas for courses, they will be screened again," he said today.

"We want to ensure that armed forces personnel are free from diseases when they leave service and are in satisfactory health condition," he told reporters at Wisma Pertahanan here.

Dr Abdul Razak was speaking after giving a talk entitled "HIV Infection Among Armed Forces Personnel" at a forum held in conjunction with the army's Family Day tomorrow.

He said soldiers assigned for UN peacekeeping duties were also required to undergo health checks before leaving and upon their return to the country.

They also had to undergo another round of check-up six months after their return, he said.

On HIV/Aids infection in the armed forces, Dr Abdul Razak said a handful of personnel were detected to be suffering from the disease while in service but the situation was not alarming.

He said the armed forces held regular talks and forums to enhance awareness among personnel on the threat posed by the virus.

"We are promoting awareness programmes so that whatever number we have now will remain the same. In fact, the rate should be zero; we should not have any more cases of HIV/Aids in the armed forces (in the future)," he said.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Aids Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said the number of HIV/Aids sufferers worldwide as at last year was 36.1 million, including 1.4 million children.

In her talk entitled "HIV/Aids -- Security Threat Paradigm", she said among the factors contributing to soldiers contracting the disease was that they had to be away from their wives for long periods.

Pressure, encouragement from peers and their risk-taking behaviour were also contributory factors, she said.

-- BERNAMA

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