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SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS ON MONDAY

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Nov 3 (Bernama) -- Asean leaders are expected to come out with a four-year action plan until 2005 to combat the spread of HIV and Aids in the region during the Seventh Asean Summit here on Monday.

Leaders of the Asean member countries are scheduled to adopt a statement and affirm their support for a regional action plan, an idea mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asean secretary-general Rodolfo C. Severino Jr said today that Aids was a transboundary problem and did not recognise national boundaries.

"If we don't work in concert in developing policies and taking action, we will not succeed in reducing the spread of this disease within Asean member countries," he said.

He said the focus would be on migrant workers, the vulnerable population such as fishermen, sailors, truck-drivers and contract labourers, because of their mobility which often led to lack of access to information about the disease.

According to the latest Asean Aids Fact Sheet, Thailand has the highest number of HIV reported cases of 984,000 persons, Indonesia (80,000-120,000), Cambodia (241,000), Laos (61,130), Malaysia (38,340), Myanmar (31,453), the Philippines (5,000-13,000), Singapore (4,000), Vietnam (estimated 200,000 by 2005) and Brunei (20).

-- BERNAMA

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