

# WHO: We need travel advisory to check SARS

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**PETALING JAYA:** The World Health Organisation will continue to impose restrictions like the travel advisory to check the spread of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) if the disease re-emerges.

World Health Organisation (WHO) director-general Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland said this (travel advisory) was among measures that had helped to contain the spread of SARS.

"I am sure that the travel advisory will be imposed again if SARS returns in future.

"There is no way to avoid the spread of SARS if we do not do what is necessary," she said at a press conference after the two-day WHO Global Conference on SARS: Where Do We Go From Here yesterday.

Dr Brundtland was asked whether the travel advisory was still needed since suspected SARS cases could be

screened with thermal scanners.

The travel advisory is touted to be the curse of **SARS** because of its economic implications on the countries involved, especially on tourism.

On the blanket travel ban some countries imposed on their citizens during the height of the SARS scare, Dr Brundtland said different countries reacted and responded differently. As such, there was a need to come up with an International Health Regulation to avoid unnecessary disruption to international travel.

"It will help everybody if they can agree at the international level of what is prudent and what is not to avoid the spread of SARS and also no unnecessary limitation on travelling," she said.

Dr Brundtland stressed the need to remain vigilant always,

particular in places where the disease has tapered off in order to avoid a recurrence.

"Don't be complacent because we think it is all over. As long as the virus is there, as long as patients carry the virus, it can spread," she cautioned.

On her meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Putrajaya earlier, Dr Brundtland said he was interested in the latest developments of SARS and the necessity for future co-operation across borders.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng accompanied Dr Brundtland and other WHO top officials during a courtesy call on Dr Mahathir.

In her closing speech, she said the conference was a success as experts had developed a deeper understanding of their roles, potential and future responsibilities.