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AIDS-Module

JAKIM CREATES SPECIAL HIV/AIDS MODULE FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 19 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) is designing a special module for religious leaders to enhance their awareness and understanding about HIV/AIDS.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said the training module, formulated with the help of the Health Ministry and the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAM), was expected to be introduced by the end of this year.

"We are trying to find a more effective formula to handle the HIV/AIDS problem. We cannot look at this problem lightly because the number of sufferers are increasing all the time," he said after opening the Second International Islamic Leaders' Consultation on HIV/AIDS here today.

More than 200 academicians and Islamic community leaders from 30 countries such as South Africa, United States, Indonesia, Singapore as well as local representatives are attending the five-day consultation which ends on Friday.

"This programme is to increase the awareness of HIV/AIDS among religious leaders. It is important that they understand this problem because society will listen to them," Abdul Hamid said.

The first HIV/AIDS consultation held in Kampala, Uganda two years ago discussed ways as to how Islamic society could handle the issue effectively.

Meanwhile, MAM President Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said there had been increased awareness of HIV/AIDS among the Islamic society.

"Two years ago we took a delegation, including JAKIM officers, the Mufti and the Imam Besar of the National Mosque to Uganda to attend the first consultation. It was an eye opener for them to see a country whose citizens related to HIV/AIDS," she said.

She said the second consultation would discuss five primary areas, namely human dignity, vulnerability, sexuality, drug use and the role of Muslim leaders.

Some 42 million people around the world were living with HIV/AIDS today and the fact that more were becoming infected daily showed that those epidemic issues could no longer be put aside, she said.

Amongst the speakers at the conference are Prof Dr Mohd Kamal Hassan from International Islamic University Malaysia, the Mufti of Uganda Sheikh Shaban Mubajje, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS for Asia Dr Nafis Sadik and Secretary-General of the World Conference on Religion and Peace Dr William Vendley.

-- BERNAMA

SHI AHH EMK ABG