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Chua-SARS

M'SIA NOT IN LIST OF SARS-HIT COUNTRIES, SAYS CHUA

KUALA LUMPUR, June 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has never been included in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) list of countries hit by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak.

Therefore there is no need for Malaysia to obtain verification from the world health body that the country is free from SARS, said Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng.

"We have never been listed by WHO as a SARS-hit country, so how is it to get out from the list (as the country has never been included in the first place)," he told reporters after opening a health awareness campaign organised by Road Builders here today.

Chua said there were many parties who were still confused over the issue and thought that Malaysia had yet to be declared SARS-free despite Singapore being taken out from the SARS-hit list at midnight May 23.

He said Malaysia was never in the SARS watch-list issued by WHO as there had been no outbreak in the country and the two Malaysians who died from the illness contracted the disease while they were abroad.

Chua said Malaysia had also initiated strict and effective measures to prevent SARS from spreading within the country.

He said Malaysia's efforts to curb the spread of SARS had been acknowledged by WHO, paving the way for the world health body to hold the "WHO Global Conference on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)" here on June 17-18.

Chua said over 1,000 participants were expected to attend the conference, held in collaboration with the Health Ministry.

"They include 500 experts and specialists on public health, epidemiology, clinical medicine, virology apart from between 200 and 400 media representatives and 500 other participants," he said.

Chua said the conference was organised to study the epidemiology, clinical management, study and laboratory findings on SARS and the strategy to eradicate the illness.

He said the conference would also discuss working papers on global impact of SARS and the experience of countries hit by SARS outbreak -- China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada and United States.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will open the conference.

-- BERNAMA

MUN KHY ZUL