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SARS-Conclude

SARS CONFERENCE A GREAT SUCCESS- WHO DG

PETALING JAYA, June 18 (Bernama) -- The World Health Organisation's first Global Conference on the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which ended here this evening has been a great success, WHO Director General Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland said.

"This conference as I have informed the Malaysian Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has been a great success. I enjoyed the discussions I attended and we have learnt more about the disease than before," she said in her concluding remarks at the close of the conference.

Brundtland and WHO Executive Director Dr David Heymann, accompanied by Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng, met Dr Mahathir this afternoon at his office in the Federal capital, Putrajaya.

Although the two-day WHO Global Conference on SARS, which began here yesterday at the Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel, did not provide any conclusive evidence on the source of the killer disease, it shed light on the severity of the disease and enabled experts to share ideas and experience on ways to tackle and contain the disease.

The SARS outbreak is thought to have originated from Guangdong, China in November last year and spread worldwide taking nearly 800 lives and affecting some 9,000 people.

"We can see things more clearly now (after the conference). Many of us were caught-up with our day-to-day affairs fighting the disease, not many had time to think. This conference gave us that time...to reflect what we have achieved and what we have to do for the future," she said.

Brundtland said the conference provided the needed platform for healthcare experts to share vital experience and expertise not only on SARS but also other new diseases which could come-up in the future.

"We have learnt vital lessons, so that we can be better prepared for emerging new diseases, sure enough there will be new ones and we must be fully prepared to deal with it," she said.

She said the world medical fraternity should be better prepared to deal with such new diseases in a more effective, efficient and speedier manner to reduce the risk of losing lives.

She said the fraternity was much more prepared now to face the new challenges and new diseases than it was a few months ago.

In his closing remarks, Chua said Malaysiay was honoured to have been given the opportunity to host the Global Conference on SARS.

"We enjoyed the company of the participants and as the Prime Minister (Dr Mahathir) had said, there will be more microbes to come and we have to be better prepared for it."

"What we have done today is a great service to humanity and I, on behalf of the Malaysian Government wish to extend my gratitude to all parties who made this conference a success," Chua added.

-- BERNAMA

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