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Halal-Vaccine

M'SIAN FIRM TO PRODUCE HALAL VACCINE FOR MUSLIM MARKET

KUALA LUMPUR, May 10 (Bernama) -- A Malaysian company, using Cuban bio-technology expertise, will be producing halal vaccine to treat meningococcal disease for the global Muslim market.

Bioven Holdings Sdn Bhd Chairman Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said today the present vaccine to treat meningitis, which is available in the market, contained a non-halal substance, porcine.

"The Fatwa Council made a declaration that vaccine must be devoid of porcine. At the moment there is a supply of halal vaccination (in the country) but it is not adequate," he told reporters after attending a talk on Cuba's genetic engineering industry, presented by Cuba's Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Director-General Dr Luis Saturnino Herrera Martinez at the Cuban embassy here.

Mukhriz said the company, Finlay-Heber-Bioven Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Bioven, invested about RM250,000 to conduct research to produce the vaccine in Cuba and a portion of the work would be carried out by local experts at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

He said it would take about 18 months before the new vaccine is available in the market and later the product would be sold globally -- mainly in Muslim countries.

"About 250,000 Malaysian Muslims perform their Haj and Umrah annually and we plan to go regional, first starting with Indonesia, and also market to all the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) countries," he said.

The new vaccine was initially experimented using synthetic substance but the outcome was not encouraging, so the company switched to bovine (using beef) and it yielded better results, Mukhriz said.

"We want to replace non-halal vaccines with halal vaccines and that is our objective. From the religious point, it is our obligation. (Earlier) we used the old vaccine because we did not have the new product and now it is our obligation to go for the new one," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Martinez said that at least 10 Memorandums of Understanding on genetic engineering sectors, had been signed between Cuba and Malaysia, mainly involving universities and companies.

-- BERNAMA

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