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Firm working on `halal' meningitis vaccine for pilgrims

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - A local company is working to produce a halal vaccine for meningococcal meningitis for haj pilgrims.

Finlay-Heber-Bioven Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Bioven Holdings Sdn Bhd, will be working with the Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) in Cuba to develop the ACYW 135 vaccine to treat meningitis.

Bioven chairman Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said the supply of halal vaccination in the country was inadequate and some contained a non-halal substance called porcine.

"We have invested about RM250,000 to conduct research and it will take us between 12 and 18 months before the vaccine is available."

The collaboration will also involve experts from Universiti Sains Malaysia and other local universities.

"We hope to market this vaccine globally, especially to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference countries," he said after attending a talk on the genetic engineering industry in Cuba presented by CIGB director general Dr Luis Saturnino Herrera Martinez (picture) at the Cuban embassy today.

Also present was Cuban ambassador Pedro Monzon Barata.

Saudi Arabia has made it compulsory for all haj pilgrims to be vaccinated before leaving for Mecca.

(END)