

# Malaysia to chair panel on making vaccines

The Star - 15/6/2007.

MALAYSIA will chair a steering committee comprising representatives from governments and vaccine producers to help the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) member countries become self-reliant in producing vaccines.

The Self-Reliance in Vaccine Production Committee will be headed by the country's National Institute for Natural Products, Vaccines and Biologicals (9Bio) and is expected to start work within the year.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said the committee was

formed because there was a feeling among OIC members that they should be self-reliant in producing vaccines due to halal and non-halal concerns.

"They have appointed Malaysia to be chairman of the steering committee in producing vaccines that are safe, effective and affordable," he told reporters yesterday on the sidelines of the KL-OIC Health Ministerial Conference.

The committee would also help producers, whether private or public, fulfil World Health Organisation

pre-qualification status to start producing vaccines of accepted standards.

Dr Chua said they were also looking at how to establish strategic partnerships with multinational companies with an established track record in order to help "jump-start" the committee.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Chua said that infectious diseases remained the second leading cause of death globally, with 14.1 million deaths in 2001.

He added that the dramatic

changes in society, technology and the environment, together with diminished effectiveness in certain disease control approaches, had caused infectious diseases to expand or re-emerge.

"Health has therefore become an important dimension in the foreign relationship among nations. It is a common challenge to all nations.

"At the same time, it provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen solidarity within and between nations to face these infectious diseases."