

# Malaysia taking steps to meet health issues

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**GENEVA:** Investing in human capital development and the capabilities of Malaysia's laboratories are among the steps being taken to meet challenges posed by infectious diseases and disasters, said Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek.

He said training and infrastructure development were key areas to be addressed in meeting the challenges.

This, he said, included equipping the ministry's Crisis Preparedness and Response Command Centre with teleconferencing to facilitate local, regional and

international communication if the need arose.

"Vaccine procurement and development are also areas that we are paying attention to," he said in his speech at the 60th World Health Organisation Assembly here yesterday.

"Malaysia has and will continue to play its role to further strengthen international health security."

Dr Chua said the world faced many challenges in health security with emerging and re-emerging infections, natural and man-made disasters, as well as human

conflicts.

He said the world would continue to see devastation caused by tsunamis, earthquakes and floods and their impact on the health of those affected.

Other issues of concern were biological, chemical and radiological toxic wastes, their unsafe use and disposal.

Dr Chua also said that rapid modes of transport, increased travel and trade and increasing international migration of people contributed to the spread of diseases such as Severe Acute

Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and avian flu.

Stating that Malaysia had contributed US\$1mil (RM3.4mil) for global polio eradication, he reiterated the country's commitment to working with the WHO in strengthening health security.

Malaysia, he said, had and would continue to take steps to enforce the International Health Regulations such as introducing new legislation to regulate the import and export of human remains, human tissues and pathogenic organisms and substances.