

**Ban Ki-Moon Impressed With Malaysia's Commitment In Tackling TB**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 22 (Bernama) -- United Nations (UN) secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon said he is impressed with the country's commitment in addressing tuberculosis (TB), the second top infectious killer of adults in the world.

During his visit to the Institute of Respiratory Medicine in Jalan Pahang here today, Ban commended the Health Ministry which had provided free clinical management to all tuberculosis patients.

"I commend the government of Malaysia for helping tuberculosis patients here and many others. The government provides free services and treatment to those involved. This is remarkable," he told reporters at the end of the visit.

Ban, who was accompanied by his wife Ban Soon-taek, is on a two-day official visit to Malaysia, his first since taking office on Jan 1, 2007. He and his entourage comprising UN officials and staff arrived here yesterday.

Ban and his wife interacted with two TB patients undergoing treatment at the institute. They were joined by Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

In his speech, the UN top diplomat called for intensified global solidarity to ensure that all people were free from tuberculosis and its devastating effects.

"Millions of children have lost their parents, children who are exposed to sick family members are at a high risk of contracting the disease," he noted.

"Far too many go untreated since TB is difficult to diagnose and treat in children. That's why this year we should aim to expand awareness on how children are affected by this disease," he added.

According to Ban, 46 million people had been cured and seven million lives saved since 1995, thanks to the efforts of the UN, governments, doctors, civil society groups and other members of society.

In 2011, 8.4 million people were infected with TB, while 1.4 million died from it.

Twenty-two countries carry 80 per cent of the burden of TB, four of which are in the Western Pacific Region, namely Cambodia, China, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Liow told reporters later that there had been a slight increase in TB cases in Malaysia -- 64 per 100,000 population in the last decade compared with 72 per 100,000 currently.

He noted that foreign workers made up 10 per cent of the 20,666 TB cases in the country.

Ban's visit to the institute was part of the commemoration of the World TB Day, celebrated on March 24 annually.

It marks the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch detected the cause of tuberculosis, the TB bacillus.

The theme of this year's celebration is 'Stop TB in Our Lifetime'.

The Institute of Respiratory Medicine in the Malaysian capital is a renowned referral centre for the management of tuberculosis since 1958.

Initially known as Clinic Jalan Pahang, the facility later saw the construction of new structures for the country's national tuberculosis programme and Tuberculosis Hospital.

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