

Dr Zaliha: We're ready for any pandemic, including outbreak of 'Disease X'

By AMALIA AZMI - September 25, 2023 @ 2:57pm

KUALA LUMPUR: Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa has given her assurances that Malaysia is prepared to face any future pandemic, including the ominous-sounding threat known as "Disease X".

This comes as health experts have warned that the next pandemic may be more devastating than Covid-19 .

"It is called X because we do not know what the disease is, but the ministry is always prepared for any possibility that may occur in the future.

"The World Health Organisation will alert its member countries whenever a new disease epidemic occurs.

"In New York, where 154 United Nations members convened alongside health ministers, there was no discussion regarding 'Disease X'," said Dr Zaliha, referring to the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

She said this in a press conference after the handover ceremony for the Kuala Lumpur Hospital (HKL) Nephrology and Urology Institute project here today, which was also attended by Work Minister, Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi.

Yesterday, the media reported that health experts expressed concerns that the looming threat of the next significant pandemic could potentially result in the loss of millions more lives compared to Covid-19.

WHO has labelled this "Disease X" simply because no one knows what the next pandemic will be.

It has recommended that the immediate preparation of a vaccine as a quick response, citing the fact that the world had been unprepared when facing Covid-19 in early 2020.

On another matter, Dr Zaliha said her ministry hoped to secure a higher allocation than what was given in the previous budget.

She said there were three priorities for the 2024 Budget, which is set to be tabled in October.

In the 2023 Budget, the ministry was the second highest recipient, with an allocation of RM36.3 billion, an increase from the RM32.4 billion allocated for 2022.