

Transmission of disease X may stem from various sources, including animals - Health DG

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PUTRAJAYA: The transmission of disease X may stem from various sources, including zoonotic transmission, which means infection from animals to humans, said Director-General of Health Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan.

As an explanation for disease X which is currently the focus of many parties, Dr Muhammad Radzi said that even though the characteristics of disease X have not yet been identified, and the timing of its occurrence is unknown, health experts have expressed concerns about its impact.

Furthermore, he said that the rate of disease X transmission will increase with the increasing contact between humans and animals, coupled with the ease of human movement across borders.

"Compared to COVID-19, which causes fewer deaths, disease X is expected to spread easily like measles and may pose a life-threatening risk, similar to Ebola," he said in a statement today.

Disease X is a name coined by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2018 for an unknown pathogen with the potential to cause a global outbreak.

Dr Muhammad Radzi said that, in preparation for dealing with disease X, a comprehensive pandemic plan, the expansion of vaccination campaigns, and the provision of special pandemic allocations are vital, as recommended by the WHO.

"The 'One Health' approach, which emphasises the relationship between humans, animals, and the environment, is a crucial component in strengthening cooperation across various disciplines," he said.

He also stressed that individual health care, including a healthy lifestyle, is integral to preparedness against disease X.

He said the Ministry of Health (MOH) is also always on alert and vigilant against the possibility of disease X based on past experiences in dealing with diseases like COVID-19, Nipah virus, SARS, and MERS-CoV, and the national healthcare system is continually strengthened as part of preparations to address any health threats.

"While the possibility of disease X occurring should be taken seriously, excessive anxiety should be avoided. The public is always advised to follow health guidelines, practice good health habits, and stay informed about the latest developments regarding this disease," he added.

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