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## Medical issues related to TPP worry NGOs

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have reiterated their concern over medical-related issues which come under the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP).

Malaysia AIDS Council Policy Executive, Fifa Rahman, said the Malaysian Government has not engaged with the industry people or the NGOs on the issues.

“We are worried that the person assigned to negotiate on the agreement might not be somebody from the field and in the end, Malaysians will suffer,” she said this at a public forum on “The impact of TPP Agreement on the Accessibility to Affordable Medicine”, here, Saturday.

The forum panel consisted of officials from Malaysian AIDS Council, Breast Cancer Welfare Association Malaysia and the Third World Network, an independent non-profit international network of organisations.

She said among the possible negative impacts from TPP were expensive patent protection, patent linkage that prevented registration of generic medicines and border measures that could lead to their unjustified seizures.

Fifa said the US, via the TPP, wanted strict provisions that would reduce access to affordable medicines.

“Patented medicines are expensive because the company holding the patent has the exclusive right to make or import them for 20 years,” she said.

She also claimed that the US planned to extend the exclusive right period to 25 years and this would stop Malaysians from getting more affordable medicine. “The US is demanding strict border control measures, which will enable TPP governments to seize generic medicines when imported, exported or in transit so long as they looked confusingly similar to trademarked goods,” she said.

Fifa said Malaysia has agreed to sign the agreement because it would bring in more foreign direct investments and provide more jobs to the local.

She also alleged that the US also planned to liberalise the tobacco industry to boost its industry. TPP is a multilateral FTA that aims to further liberalise the economies of the Asia-Pacific region.

Among the countries that have joined the negotiations are Chile, New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, Vietnam and Peru. — Bernama