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# Diabetes more fatal than AIDS

UN official: Heart disease and cancer also among top four killer diseases

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Heart diseases, chronic respiratory conditions, cancer and diabetes have been named the world's top four killer diseases – more fatal than infectious illnesses like AIDS and influenza A (H1N1).

United Nations University-International Institute for Global Health director Tan Sri Dr Mohamed Salleh Mohamed Yasin said such a revelation was frightening because these

diseases were “highly preventable” and were due to lifestyle choices.

“Such non-infectious diseases or chronic non-communicable diseases (CNCDs), also contribute to 60% of all deaths worldwide.

“It is twice the number of the combined deaths caused by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, maternal and perinatal conditions and nutritional deficiencies,” he told reporters at Hospital Universiti Keb-

angsaan Malaysia.

Dr Mohamed Salleh added that such illnesses were silent killers and would affect those who do not control their diet and exercise.

“The rise in these CNCDs may be caused by the improved standard of living in countries like India and China where people become more affluent and eat richer foods,” he said.

He added that the four top diseases were pointed out by the recently formed Global Alliances for Chronic Diseases in its inaugural summit in New Delhi and that it was now working towards coordinating research to combat the diseases.

The institute's senior research fellow Prof Datuk Dr Syed Mohamed Aljunid said 85% of breathing problems or chronic obstructive pulmo-

nary disease in Malaysia were caused by smoking.

“But if people stopped smoking, 90% of lung cancer cases can be avoided,” he said, adding that a relatively small amount of RM116mil was spent every year to treat lung cancer patients because most die during the first year of their condition.

“This is due to the fact that most lung cancer patients detect the disease during the final stages and most of them are men,” Dr Syed said, adding that breast and cervical cancers were most common among women.

The institute's professor of environmental health Prof Dr Jamal Hisham Hashim pointed out that indoor pollution from cooking stoves have also contributed to about 1.5 million premature deaths every year.