

Headline **No HIV threat from monkeys**
Date **11 May 2011**
MediaTitle **The Sun**
Section **National**
Journalist **N/A**
Frequency **Daily**
Circ / Read **270,506 / 171,000**

Language **English**
Page No **6**
Article Size **121 cm²**
Color **Black/white**
ADValue **1,334**
PRValue **4,002**



'No HIV threat from monkeys'

AN expert has allayed fears of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) threat from monkeys, following newspaper reports that over 80% of monkeys caught from various towns and cities nationwide were found to have the virus or suffer from dengue, malaria or tuberculosis.

According to a *China Press* report yesterday, Dr Reuben Sunil Kumar Sharma, a lecturer at the Department of Veterinary Pathology and Microbiology, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), said the report is incorrect.

At present, there is no report to prove that monkeys in the natural habitat in Malaysia have been naturally infected with HIV, that they can become reservoir host of HIV or that humans can contract HIV from the primates.

"Monkeys cannot get HIV, they only contract SIV or simian immunodeficiency virus. Only humans can contract HIV, but humans cannot get it from monkeys," he was quoted as saying.

He said monkeys can be infected with SIV or SFV (simian foamy virus), which are similar to HIV and causes the Simian Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (SAIDS).

Humans do not suffer from SAIDS, and the hypothesis that HIV originated from monkeys or chimpanzees remains a theory.

Reuben also said the figures quoted by a Malay daily report on Sunday did not come from UPM. He added that current evidence does not show humans can get dengue from monkeys.

Instead of contracting HIV or dengue, he said there is a likelier chance for humans coming in contact with monkeys to contract tuberculosis, malaria and parasites from the primates.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Douglas Unggah Embas said human encroachment into monkeys' habitat, and the public's habit to feed the primates have caused more monkeys to "invade" residential areas.

"Feeding of monkeys is the main reason. I urge the public not to feed monkeys or come into contact with them to avoid contracting diseases," he said.

He said the Wildlife Protection and National Park Department is studying the spread of diseases by monkeys but so far there is no such report. It is also looking for ways to check the rapid growth of the macaque population.

He said his ministry will continue to talk to animal rights organisations on the best way to repel monkeys encroaching into residential areas, as these groups are against the inhumane treatment of these primates.