

Indonesia's Papua plans to tag AIDS sufferers

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JAYAPURA, Indonesia (Reuters) - Indonesia's Papua province is set to pass a bylaw that requires some HIV/AIDS patients to be implanted with microchips in a bid to prevent them infecting others, a lawmaker said on Saturday.

Under the bylaw, which has caused uproar among human rights activists, patients who had shown "actively sexual behavior" could be implanted with a microchip to monitor their activity, lawmaker John Manangsang said.

"It's a simple technology. A signal from the microchip will track their movements and this will be received by monitoring authorities," Manangsang said.

If a patient with HIV/AIDS was found to have infected a healthy person, there would be a penalty, he said without elaborating.

The Jakarta Post newspaper on Saturday quoted Constan Karma, the head of Papua's National AIDS Commission, as saying the plan violated human rights.

The local parliament was expected to introduce the controversial legislation in Papua, which lies in Indonesia's easternmost fringe, by end of this month, Manangsang said.

The number of HIV/AIDS cases per 100,000 people in Papua is nearly 20 times the national average in Indonesia, according to a government study in 2007.

Health experts say the disease has been spreading rapidly from prostitutes to housewives in the past years.

High rates of promiscuity, rituals in some Papuan tribes where partner swapping takes place, poor education about AIDS and lack of condoms are among factors that cause the spread of the disease there.

(Writing by Karima Anjani; Editing by Ed Davies and Bill Tarrant)

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