

Dr M: Hospitals must provide quality service

By Farush Khan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Hospital managements should formulate a certain standard which can be used as a yardstick to measure the quality or facilities they provide, Datu Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said this was important because hospitals must provide quality service that would meet the expectations of those seeking medical treatment.

He added that in providing medical services, private hospitals especially should ensure a balance between the need for revenue and social responsibility.

Opening the RM151.5 million Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) in Jalan Tun Razak here today, Dr Mahathir spoke on the concept of

quality, saying that its definition was wide and variable.

"Some link the quality of services to cost, which means that the higher the cost of the services, the better the quality.

"For the private sector, quality may mean an increase in company profits based on the increase in total sales and customers.

"There are also those who believe that quality service also comes with satisfactory service and customer relations like courtesy, friendliness, efficiency, punctuality and trustworthiness," he said.

There were also those who linked equipment and technology used with quality which meant that the more sophisticated the technology used in a service, the higher the quality of service.

The Prime Minister said: "All

these definitions on quality may be correct and should exist in the medical field which provides treatment facilities and services to the public.

"However, I feel quality service, in general, is a service which can fulfil the expectations of patients who seek treatment and are satisfied with the level of treatment received."

He said the services and facilities provided must be safe and functional. The prescriptions to patients, for example, must be of the right dosage and easy to use.

The services given, he said, should also be given at the appropriate time so as to ensure maximum benefits to the public.

Dr Mahathir said information and instructions written by doc-

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ctors and nurses regarding patients must be precise and clear so that there would be no mistake when the patients were referred to another section or other staff.

Equally important, he said, was the durability of each facility provided. For example, the medicine given to patients must be filled in containers which were durable.

Besides the criteria in determining quality services, the hospital managements must ensure that the various departments and sections were within easy reach of the patients.

He said facilities such as signboards, public toilets and waiting areas must be clean and comfortable.

Dr Mahathir said the sensitivity of the hospital staff in entertaining the requests and complaints of patients and the public must also be

given priority.

He called on hospitals to ensure that the facilities provided were satisfactory, sophisticated and of high technology.

Dr Mahathir said, however, equipment alone would not guarantee quality service if the skills of the staff who were using them were not upgraded.

"In-service training within and outside the country is also important to improve their expertise and skills. With trained and skilled staff, certainly they can provide quality services to the public and patients."

He said maintenance of equipment must also be given attention. This was to ensure that the equipment was functional at all times and was lasting. Apart from modern equipment and skilled staff to handle the equipment, some innovations and new facilities had to be introduced by the hospitals from time to time.