

Towards goal of better run hospitals

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Health Minister Datuk Lee Kim Sai today welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposal for a common standard for all hospital managements to measure the quality of hospital services and facilities.

"I will instruct ministry officials to follow up on Dr Mahathir's proposal and to draw up plans to improve services at all hospitals," he said.

He was commenting on the Prime Minister's statement yesterday when he opened the RM15.1 million National Heart Institute (IHN) that hospital managements should formulate a certain standard which could be used as a yardstick to measure quality or facilities provided.

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

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

Lee gave an assurance that all government hospitals would continue to provide quality treatment to the people at all times.

However, the question of providing comfort to patients, he said, could not be met as compared to that available in private hospitals.

"Government hospitals cater to a wide spectrum of patients and I must admit that comfort is still lacking," he added.

Lee said having modern equipment and acquiring

the latest medical technologies would not be enough until there was a high standard of professionalism.

"I must stress that enhancing professionalism among medical staff is the cornerstone of a quality service."

The president of the Federation of Private Medical Practitioners Associations of Malaysia (FPMPAM), Dr Milton Lum, also supported Dr Mahathir's proposal and said all hospitals, whether in the private or public sector, had to strive for quality service to meet the increasing public expectations.

"Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of hospital administrators who are not medically qualified, especially in the private sector, and an increasing number of private hospitals have been established or owned by business groups."

Dr Lum said the FPMPAM had called on all hospital owners, managements and administrators to consider always the advice of their medical staff on issues concerning the standard of care provided to patients.

National Consumer Protection Advisory Council member Mr Lee Lam Thye said all hospitals, whether government or private owned, should respond to Dr Mahathir's call and take steps to devise a common standard of hospital management.

"Consumers are now more conscious of their rights and expect quality services from hospitals," he said, adding that incidents of negligence by doctors and hospital staff in the past had clearly affected public confidence.