

PM: Introduce preventive

MS 1 3 AUG 1993

By Farush Khan

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.—
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mo-
hammad today called on gov-
ernment and private hospi-
tals to implement preven-
tive health and community
extension programmes.

The Prime Minister said
that part of the profits from
private hospitals, medical
practitioners and clinics
could be set aside for the
programmes.

"Philanthropists and cor-
porations may contribute
funds for preventive health
programmes and health re-

search studies that would be
of direct benefit to the peo-
ple," he said when launch-
ing the Heart Week organ-
ised by the Heart
Foundation of Malaysia
here.

He said the establishment
of corporate health promo-
tion programmes would
have value to both the em-
ployers and employees and
the nation.

"A healthy workplace
should be for all and not to a
group of people committed
to their own well-being. It
involves the integration of
the functions of traditional-

ly separate departments in-
cluding occupational health
safety, human resource de-
velopment, communica-
tions, employee benefits
and public relations." He
said the concepts extended
to managing a healthy
workforce by creating a cor-
porate culture based on the
belief that concern for the
health of individual employ-
ees provided a competitive
edge in this evolving, com-
plex global marketplace for
today and tomorrow, the
year 2020 and beyond.

Dr Mahathir said it was
proper that efforts be

stepped up to make Malay-
sians healthy physically
and mentally. This is every-
one's responsibility, he said.

He said that heart ail-
ments, including stroke had
become the number one kill-
er in this country.

He said 29 per cent of the
deaths registered in hospi-
tals in Peninsular Malay-
sia in 1990 was caused by
cardiovascular diseases.

Between 1981 and 1989,
the death rate had increased
by 142 per cent from 15.3 for
every 100,000 people to 37 for
every 100,000.

He said the number of

health programmes

people admitted to hospital
because of cardiovascular
disease had shown an in-
crease by 534 per cent from
1965 to 1989.

Dr Mahathir said in the
60s and 70s, Malaysians who
suffered this disease had to
seek treatment overseas
and had to pay high fees.
This was because Malaysia
did not have the facilities.

However, 1992 was the
most fortunate year for
heart patients as the Na-
tional Heart Institute was
set up.

Now, he said the Govern-
ment had to review the cost

incurred in providing
health facilities to the peo-
ple.

He said the free treatment
system was started during
the colonial period to popu-
larise Western medical
treatment. During that
time, treatment was limited
to cheap medication, that is
of between 10 and 20 sen per
bottle.

Therefore, free medical
services provided by the
Government was not a bur-
den then. But the situation
has changed now and treat-
ment requires high expendi-
ture.

The Government cannot
afford to maintain free med-
ical services without ad-
versely affecting the expendi-
ture on other
infrastructural develop-
ment.

That was why the Govern-
ment has to impose nominal
fees, and for cases that re-
quire high expenditure, rea-
sonable fees were charged.

Dr Mahathir said the Gov-
ernment was today still in-
terested in providing treat-
ment with low fees but the
Government salary scheme
was not attractive to spe-
cialists.

He said because of that
many had left government
hospitals for private which
offered them better salaries.

That is why the Govern-
ment is trying out the semi-
private system for treat-
ment of heart disease.

"With this deserving gov-
ernment staff and the public
can still seek specialist
treatment without having
to pay high charges," he
said.

He said this new approach
was being tried because the
Government could not af-
ford to provide free treat-
ment anymore.