

Have a heart, PM tells hospitals

By LEE KARYEAN

KUALA LUMPUR: The Prime Minister wants private hospitals, clinics and doctors to set aside part of their profits to implement preventive health programmes.

"Philanthropists and corporations should contribute funds for preventive health programmes and health research studies that would be of direct benefit to the people," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when opening the third Heart Week organised by the Malaysian Heart Foundation at the Lot 10 shopping centre here. The theme of the exhibition is Protect Your Heart.

He said the establishment of corporate health promotion programmes would benefit both employees and employers as well as the nation.

"A healthy workplace should be for all and not be for a group of people committed to their own well-being."

He said cardiovascular diseases, including coronary heart disease and stroke, had become the number one killer in the country and the people should adopt a healthy lifestyle.

"If we don't change our lifestyle, it will lead to various modern diseases or 'the rich man's disease' such as high blood pressure and diabetes," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government had incurred high expenses in providing health services.

"The system of free medical treatment in Malaysia was started in the colonial days as a means to popularise Western medicine and at that time

treatment was limited to giving drugs that were cheap."

He said medical treatment has become costly today and the government was unable to maintain free treatment without having to transfer funds meant for infrastructure facilities.

For this reason, the Government was forced to impose a nominal fee and in cases where there was a need for high expenditure, a reasonable

charge was imposed, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was trying out a semi-private system for the treatment of heart diseases to allow eligible government staff to obtain specialist treatment.

The public could also use the facility without having to pay too much for medical treatment because the Government had subsidised by providing the physical facilities, he said.