

# PM: Firms may be called on to build liver institute

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Government may encourage the private sector to set up a liver institute like the National Heart Institute, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said such an institute was costly to set up while the Government had other priorities to consider.

"In fact, we feel the Kuala Lumpur Hospital requires a new building," he told newsmen when asked if a liver institute would be set up.

He said the Government might seek other ways through privatisation to provide such health services in big towns.

The Prime Minister had earlier opened the ninth biennial scientific meeting of the Asian-Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver here.

In his speech, he said the country did not have a liver transplant programme although liver resection had been available since 1964.

He said the Health Ministry have been sending young doctors for specialised training overseas to meet the country's demand for liver transplants.

Setting up a transplant unit which would serve perhaps only 15 to 20 per cent of liver patients would place an additional burden on the economy, he said.

"Nevertheless, as Malaysia moves to be a fully developed country by the year 2020, I am confident we will not only have the resources but highly-trained medical personnel to equal other developed countries in specialised medical care," he said.

Dr Mahathir said liver viral infections remained a major health problem in the Asia-Pacific region.

About 600 academics, clinicians and research members on all aspects of the liver, from Malaysia and overseas, are attending the four-day meeting.