

04/04/1997

Emergency treatment and trauma care vital: Dr M

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EMERGENCY medical services and trauma care are more important in the country's move towards full industrialisation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Malaysia's epidemiological profile with increase in cardiovascular disease, cancer and injury as major killers, he said, resembles that of an industrialised country.

"The incidence of injury due to road traffic and industrial accidents is fast accelerating. It equals if not exceeds that of Western countries due to the faster rate of development in Malaysia. Urgent action is required both in terms of injury control and prevention as well as in the development of service systems of emergency medical and trauma care," Dr Mahathir said when launching the first Asian International Congress on Emergency Medicine in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

With Malaysia's switch from agriculture to industry, occupational injuries recorded in 1993 is five times higher than Japan, Sweden and the UK, he added.

In 1993, 56 per cent of all hospitalisations were from injuries sustained through motor vehicle accidents, 27 per cent were from fall and another 7 per cent from machinery related events.

For the same year, there were 27.8 deaths per 100,000 population and the number of death related accident is expected to rise to 31.2 per cent per 100,000 population with fatalities increase during festive season.

"In economic terms this represents a significant loss to the country as a large portion of casualties are young adults between 20 and 40," he said.

On the clinical front, he said, new infrastructure are being built and restructuring in the service system and the provision of trained personnel in emergency medicine.

"A comprehensive and integrated emergency and trauma services include pre-hospital care, resuscitation and stabilisation at the emergency department, definitive care and rehabilitation," he said.

In line with this, the prime minister said the Government is considering the establishment of Paramedic Training Institute for hospital and pre-hospital services.

Dr Mahathir said police, fire and other rescue personnel are encouraged to assume the role of "first responder" by performing initial assessment and basic life-support procedures, as they are among the first at the scene of an accident.

The "first responder" concept is recognised internationally as a cost-efficient and effective part of an overall emergency medical system.

"The concept of the first responder has been introduced in Malaysia where individuals who are not specifically trained in providing emergency care but are first at the accident sites are trained with life support skills to save victims and management of other aspects of the accident," he said.

Besides the "first responder" concept, he said, a comprehensive communication system as part of an emergency medical system is needed for easier public health care access.

The country, he said, is planning for an establishment of an emergency communication network which have telemedicine and teleemergency capability.

He said a complete assessment of patient condition between hospitals is possible with the advances in audio-visual technology for expert consultation. These technologies, he said, are more important as the country prepares for the Commonwealth Games next year.

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