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Mahathir - emergency

POLICE AND OTHER RESCUE PERSONNEL TO ASSUME ROLE OF FIRST RESPONDER

KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said police, fire and other rescue personnel in the country will be encouraged to assume the role of "first responder" by nature of their occupation to arrive first at the scene of an accident.

To assume the role, the Prime Minister said they would be trained to perform initial assessment and basic life-support procedures in the event of an accident.

"The concept of the first responder has been introduced in Malaysia where individuals who are not specifically trained in providing emergency care but who by nature of their occupation are the first to arrive at the incident site.

"For example, police will be trained with life support skill to focus their service to save victims and initiate life support procedure together with the management of other aspect of the accident," he said when officiating the first Asian International Congress on Emergency Medicine at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Dr Mahathir said the "first responder" concept were recognised internationally as a cost-efficient and effective part of an overall emergency medical system.

Besides training the police, fire and other rescue personnel to assume the role of "first responder", Dr Mahathir said Malaysia also needs to establish a comprehensive communication system with universal access line, like the 911 system, as part of its emergency medical system.

He said the system, which needs to be established as soon as possible, would provide the public access into the health care service to acquire any form of medical assistance.

"Malaysia is now planning for the establishment of an emergency communication network which will include tele-medicine and tele-emergency capability," he said.

He said a complete assessment of patient condition between hospitals has been made possible with the advances in audio-visual technology.

"This is ideal for our current situation where we do not have adequate specialist service in every part of the country and hence, tele-medicine will provide access to expert consultation," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the government was moving quickly especially in the areas of emergency medical services and trauma care as Malaysia moved towards full industrialisation.

He said Malaysia's epidemiological profile now resembled much more closely that of an industrialised country with cardiovascular disease, cancer and injury representing the major killers.

"Furthermore, 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," he said.

The Prime Minister said the high number of death due to accident in Malaysia was expected to increase to 31.2 per 100,000 population.

He said this was consistent with the increase in the number of registered vehicles of which motorcycles made up 58 per cent.

Dr Mahathir said the rise in fatalities became more marked during periods of heavy population movement like the last Chinese New Year and Hari Raya holidays.

He said during the 18-day holiday over the two celebrations, 614 people lost their lives, 565 sustained serious injuries and 892 suffered minor injuries.

"In economic terms, this clearly represents a significant loss to the country. A large proportion of casualties are young adults in the 20 to 40 age group," he said.

As such he said urgent action was required both in terms of injury control and prevention as well as in the development of service systems of emergency medical and trauma care.

"Prevention is an urgent priority where inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation becomes a crucial requirement in the reduction of morbidity," he said. -- Bernama

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