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Boy needs RM60,000 for surgery

PENANG, Sat. - For most couples, to be blessed with a daughter and a son is a gift.

But for casual worker Ismail Osman and his wife Ani Abdullah, their happiness were marred by the sad fact that their five-year-old son, Mahathir, was born with a facial deformity, termed as cranio-facial cleft with facial bi-partition and epibulbar dermoids.

Mahathir is blind on the right eye and poor vision on the left and his parents are now seeking public assistance to send him for a cranio-facial surgery.

His mother, Ani, a housewife, said she was grateful to the Rotary Club of Penang, which had made arrangements for her son and herself to leave on Nov 1, for Adelaide in Australia for the surgery.

"I hope after the surgery, which is scheduled for Nov 13, my son will be able to live a normal life, like any other children.

"Now he cannot even go around the neighbourhood to play as other children will avoid him because his face is disfigured," Ani said.

Ismail, 48, earns about only RM800 a month by producing ice blocks.

Rotary Club of Penang's president Micheal Chen said the proposed operation for Mahathir would be carried out at the Australian Cranio Facial Unit in Adelaide, Australia.

"The hospital in Adelaide will be taking care of all surgery cost as they had accepted Mahathir as a South Australian Government-funded patient," he said.

Chen said Mahathir would need about RM60,000 to cover for the air fares to Australia and other expenses such as a food and lodging, as he and his mother will be in the country for the whole month of November.

Mahathir is expected to stay on in the hospital for another three weeks after his operation on Nov 13.

Donations for Mahathir can be sent to Micheal Chen, Rotary Club of Penang, c/o Air-Conditioning Systems Design Sdn Bhd, Plot 77, Lebuhraya Kampung Jawa, Bayan Lepas, 11900 Penang.

All cheques, to be crossed, should be made payable to Rotary Club of Penang Medical Fund. For further information, contact Chen at 04-6442888.

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