

# Keen to export healthcare expertise

By ZAZALI MUSA in Johor Baru

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THE Johor state investment arm Johor Corp (JCorp) is keen to extend its expertise in private healthcare to the Middle Eastern countries through its public-listed entity KPJ Healthcare Bhd.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, who is also chairman of Jcorp, said yesterday that the company could offer its knowhow in setting up private hospitals and in hospital management.

He said the company had no immediate plan to own hospitals in the region but was open to some options, including taking up stakes in the local private healthcare providers.

Ghani, who had joined Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's entourage on a week-long visit to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain,

said Arab businessmen had shown interest to work closely with KPJ.

"There will be follow-up visits from businessmen there, and most probably we'll provide them more details of our healthcare business," Ghani told reporters at the opening of an Islamic economic seminar in Johor Baru.

Ghani said as Malaysia's leading private healthcare provider, the company was in a strong position to assist private healthcare providers in the Middle East improve their services.

He said there was huge potential in the private healthcare sector in the region following last year's Sept 11 terrorist attack in the US, as Arabs had skipped Europe and the US for their medical treatment.

Ghani said that more and more Arabs were now seeking medical treatment from private hospitals in South-East Asia, which would spur

health tourism in Malaysia.

According to Ghani, KPJ, which has 10 hospitals nationwide under its stable, will embark on aggressive marketing activities to attract more Arab patients to Malaysia.

He said that Arabs, especially the rich, liked to travel in big groups, and the strategy was to attract the patient.

According to Ghani, while the patient undergoes treatment, the others can engage in such activities as shopping and sight seeing.

"At present the majority of our foreign patients come from Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore, and a mix of expatriates of different nationalities based in the country," Ghani said.

He said that another service the company could venture into was providing nurses from its in-house nursing college to private and public hospitals in the Middle East.