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JOHOR EXPLORES MEDICAL SERVICES POTENTIAL IN MIDDLE EAST

JOHOR BAHRU, April 23 (Bernama) -- Johor will be marketing its medical services, hospital management services and medical tourism in the Middle East countries, a new opportunity that has posed great potential for Malaysia following the Sept 11 tragedy in the United States.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said Johor has the capacity to offer such services through the Johor Medical Group (KPJ) which has 20 years experience in the area, including the development of infrastructure and facilities for hospitals.

Apart from having 10 specialist hospitals throughout the country, KPJ also has strength in the area of training nurses. It could train nurses in its colleges to fulfill the demand from the medical markets in the Middle East, Abdul Ghani told a press conference here today.

The Menteri Besar who had returned only yesterday after following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on his trip to three Middle East countries last week, said that he saw tremendous opportunity for KPJ in the area.

He said that following the Sept 11 event, many patients from the Arab countries such as Morocco, Bahrain and Libya who had previously gone to Europe and the US for medical treatment were now looking at countries from this region for such treatments.

KPJ in particular could offer these Middle East countries its expertise and services in the area of building hospitals, providing clinic and medical infrastructure, specialists medical services, hospital management and the training of nurses.

"For an example, Libya, which is rich with oil is now interested in opening to foreign investment. This promises potential for us in this area," he said, adding that the country would be sending in a team of officers to study Malaysia's policies including its economic policies.

On the area of medical tourism, Abdul Ghani said KPJ will be negotiating with tourist agencies in the Middle East to prepare suitable packages for patients from the country and their families to travel to Malaysia both for medical treatment and touring the country at the same time.

Earlier today, Abdul Ghani officially launched a seminar on "Enhancing Islamic Economy" and the first general assembly for the Johor branch of Malaysian Islamic Trade Council (DPIMNJ).

He said the country's Muslim business community should take the effort to be responsible for the development of a global level Muslim trade network.

He said the network will form a large community of Muslim entrepreneurs that would warrant the attention of other trading communities, besides identifying the sources of supply and opportunities among fellow Muslims.

At the seminar today, which was attended by 150 members of (DPIMNJ), four working papers were presented aimed at increasing understanding among Muslim entrepreneurs of the role they have to play in enhancing the economy of Muslims.

-- BERNAMA

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