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Chua-Medical

MEDICAL PACKAGES CAN HELP REDUCE COST- CJM

PETALING JAYA, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Private hospitals should introduce medical packages in efforts to reduce cost of treatment and promote medical tourism, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today.

He said by packaging the cost of medical treatment, private hospitals would be able to attract more business at the same time assist the government keep healthcare costs low.

"If we want to make medical tourism a success and maintain healthcare charges, private hospitals must take the initiative to introduce such packages," he told reporters here.

He earlier launched the "SMI One Stop Solution" (SMIOSS) 2003, an international conference and exhibition for small and medium industries to be held in Kuala Lumpur from June 5 to 7 next year.

Chua was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that insurers in the country had reasons to increase health premiums as the cost of hospitalisation and treatment had escalated.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, had also said that the people must accept the fact that they must contribute in order to get treatment at government-run hospitals.

Chua said if medical packages were introduced, private hospitals would also overcome the "moral pitfalls" as their medical charges would become more transparent.

"This will enable patients to know exactly what they are paying for, whether a certain treatment is needed or otherwise. They can also do away with 'fees for service' as this will be included in the package," he said.

Another way medical cost could be kept low, he said, was through prescription of cheaper drugs rather than spending money on costly drugs which had the same effect as cheaper ones.

He said while private hospitals were business entities working for profit, they should also bear in mind the benefit for the their patients.

Chua said although medical insurance did not come under the purview of the Health Ministry, it was willing to provide feedback to the government, especially the Finance Ministry, in formulating policies pertaining to medical insurance.

He said the Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia was also willing to assist the government in this matter.

On the SMIOSS 2003, Chua, who is also the chairman of the National SMI Consultative Centre, said the event targetted 15,000 visitors and 250 exhibitors.

Dubbed the largest SMI solutions exhibition in the region, it is expected to attract over 15 countries including China.

The event, to be held at the Putra World Trade Centre, will showcase innovative and cost effective solutions pertaining to information and communication technology, management, marketing and branding, financing and intellectual property rights all under one roof.

-- BERNAMA

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