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IJN-Expansion
IJN TO HAVE 200 MORE BEDS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 28 (Bernama) -- The National Heart Institute (IJN) here will have 200 more beds under a massive expansion project aimed also at making it one of the world's best heart hospitals.

Its chairman Tan Sri Khatib Abdul Hamid said today the RM200 million project expected to be completed in two years was necessary because of congestion of the present facilities at the 10-year old hospital.

" I want to see IJN bench-marked against the world's best. That means it must be recognised as such by the United States," he told Bernama in an interview.

Khatib, a former diplomat who became IJN chairman last year, said the hospital was working closely with two premier heart hospitals in the United States, the Mayo Clinic and Cleveland Clinic, reputedly the top two such hospitals in the world.

The expansion project would see more intensive care facilities to overcome the long queue for treatment by heart patients, especially child patients.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had approved the project, had told him to ensure that it would remain a hospital affordable to the needy.

" This is the basis for setting up IJN in the first place. Our pricing is the cheapest in the country but without any compromise on the quality of service," he said.

Khatib said one significant feature of IJN is that it places under one roof the "best Malay brains in cardiovascular health and cardiology in the country".

He said despite its pricing policy, IJN, a company under the Ministry of Finance, was profitable but its viability would be a question if it continued to operate with inadequate facilities.

" If we continue like this, we cannot make profits, that's why we need to expand. So our owners have agreed that we have to expand but I have to find the money myself," he said when asked about the source of funding for the project.

Khatib said it was equally important for IJN to continue to attract the best brains especially among its consultants, surgeons and specialists.

" Of course all our consultants and surgeons love to work here. But love alone is not enough if we cannot reward them. So they must get an income commensurate with the market".

But he said this did not necessarily mean that IJN must give its staff the best salaries.

" Maybe slightly less, but we must continue to give the facilities and the environment that they are proud of. I must say all of them are very, very dedicated," he said.

Asked if IJN was also affected by a brain-drain, he said it mainly lost nurses who left for much higher pay in similar hospitals in Saudi Arabia.

" People asked me whether as a former diplomat I could run a hospital. I'm confident I can and I aim to take IJN to a higher level of success," said Khatib, who was a special envoy of the prime minister for two years from 1999 after serving 10 years as Malaysia's ambassador to Japan.

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