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(From left) Datuk Dr Nor Shahidah Khairullah, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican, Tun Hanif Omar and Tan Sri Azman Hashim taking a look at a Cobos Ampliprep machine that is used to detect hepatitis infections at the Malaysian Liver Foundation yesterday.

Dr M on how to beat liver cancer

KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has advised the people to see a doctor when they do not feel well and not wait for a disease to reach an advanced stage.

Narrating his own experience, Dr Mahathir said when he was a general practitioner, his brother-in-law came to see him complaining of stomach distension and was finally diagnosed with liver cancer.

"He came too late and finally succumbed to it despite trying all kinds of medicine," he said at the opening of the Malaysian Liver Foundation (MLF) building donated by Tan Sri Azman Hashim at Ara Damansara yesterday.

He said early detection would save a person's life and

it was important that people who had early symptoms of a disease go for a check-up.

Liver cancer is the eighth most common cancer among Malaysian men and nearly 90 per cent of the primary type or hepatocellular carcinoma, is preventable.

The preventable factors include Hepatitis B and C infections, alcohol abuse, long-term exposure to anatoxins, smoking, use of anabolic steroids and obesity.

Dr Mahathir, who is the foundation's patron, said people should take advantage of the latest technology for early diagnosis and treatment.

About 2.5 million Malaysians are thought to be infected with hepatitis.

MLF president Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican said most of

those with the disease were unaware of it until it was too late.

About 25 per cent of these unsuspecting individuals are at risk of serious infections and eventual death from cirrhosis and liver cancer.

"We know that up to 90 per cent of liver cancer diagnosed in this region are associated with Hepatitis B and C," he said.

MLF which was registered in April 1996 and officially launched on Aug 13, 1997, also has a research laboratory which has processed more than 40,000 specimens for Hepatitis B virus, Hepatitis C virus and HIV.

It has 132 clients comprising government hospitals, private hospitals, clinics and private laboratories.