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Malaysian Doctors Who Return Home Exempted From Public Service With Conditions

KUALA LUMPUR, April 12 (Bernama) -- The government is set to lure home more Malaysian doctors and specialists with more than 10 years experience abroad by exempting them for the compulsory three years service in public hospitals.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the programme, which was approved by the Cabinet last week, would only be open to those who had self-funded their studies.

He said details of the programme would be announced soon and it was expected to be implemented this year.

"With the extensive planning and effort to strengthen medical tourism, it is time for us to lure them home. We hope they can come back and serve the country.

"We are increasing the facility in the private sector. There is big potential for them here," he told reporters after opening the Healthcare Tourism Congress 2010 here Monday.

He said that to date, some 100 Malaysian doctors had returned from abroad under the various brain-gain programmes.

On another matter, Liow said Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican had been instructed to look into the long-standing issue of restricting doctors from advertising their services in the media.

"I recognise this problem. We feel there is a need to liberalise on this and to allow doctors to advertise their services," he said.

He added that if this was allowed, doctors would have to follow strict guidelines which included disallowing them to do comparison with other doctors.

On health tourism, Liow said the Malaysian Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), which was launched last year, had actively embarked on several programmes promoting Malaysia as the preferred healthcare destination.

He said that from the traditional markets like Singapore and Indonesia, Malaysia was now targeting medical tourists from Brunei, Europe, Australia and the United States, as well as developing Asean countries like Laos and Cambodia.

Medical tourism was also poised to become one of the major revenue earners for the country to spur it towards its high-income economy ambition, he added.

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He said that private hospitals' revenue in the country grew from RM58.9 million with around 103,000 medical tourists in 2003 to RM299.1 million in 2008 with around 374,000 medical tourists and the arrival of medical tourists for this year was expected to rise to another 30 per cent.

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