

# Healthcare can bring RM10bil to economy, says Liow

PUTRAJAYA: The healthcare industry has the potential to contribute RM10bil to the national economy by concentrating in four sectors, said Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

The areas are pharmaceutical, production of medical equipment, health tourism and training of specialists.

“While this will be mostly private sector-driven, my ministry will facilitate and provide expert assistance to the concerned companies.

“It will be a challenging time for us but we are all excited and ready to help realise the Government’s aim of generating more income from healthcare services,” he told reporters after presenting excellence service awards to Health Ministry staff yesterday.

The industry contributes some RM4bil to the economy.

Private healthcare is one of the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) under the 10th Malaysia Plan.

While the ministry targeted RM10bil in annual revenue by 2020, Liow said he was confident the goal could be achieved earlier.

One aim would be for local pharmaceutical companies to produce higher quality generic drugs which could be exported.

Liow said discussions would be held with medical equipment companies to see how his ministry could help boost production to increase export, adding that Malaysia has the expertise to provide training for foreign doctors and specialists.

“As for health tourism, we already have 35 hospitals and clinics, including dental clinics that are promoting their services.

“The ministry has also set up the Malaysian Healthcare Travel Council to promote the country’s healthcare services abroad,” he said.

Liow said the ministry would not abandon its core business of providing health services to the people.

The ministry had put in place a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to gauge the efficiency of its services – particularly in emergency assistance, pharmacy, counter service, clinic service and operations.

On another matter, the ministry refuted news reports about the outbreak of malaria in Sekinchan, Selangor, saying the recent death due to the disease involved a fisherman from Myanmar.

The three others warded in Sungai Karang hospital were also Myanmar nationals.

“They were all imported cases. We have also conducted blood test on 122 locals and 219 foreigners in the area. All tests came back negative,” he said.

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