

Star 19/10

# 'Maintain healthcare budget'

## Hilmi: Allocation below RM23bil will affect people negatively

By **NURBAITI HAMDAN**  
nurbaiti@thestar.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A budget cut for the Health Ministry will directly affect the people, says Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahya.

The Deputy Health Minister said the ministry would have problems serving the population if the allocation from the Federal Government was below RM23bil.

"We can't afford any budget cut right now. What we have at the moment is just enough.

"We would want an additional budget but if we don't get it, at least maintain the figure," he told a press conference here yesterday.

The Government had allocated a total of RM23bil, including RM1.6bil



for the development of clinics and hospitals, in the previous budget announcement.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is expected to make the Budget 2017 announcement this Friday.

Dr Hilmi said the ministry had resorted to generic medicines in its efforts to save cost.

"There are more generic than original drugs that we use but in

terms of cost, our purchase now is 50:50 for each.

"We try to change (more medicines) to generic. That's how we try to save money while at the same time giving the best service to the people," he added.

Dr Hilmi also said that the ministry had approved requests by the private health sector to increase fees due to higher costs.

"We have decided to allow a 25% increase in medical fees for private hospitals and it only affects foreign patients," he said.

The increase became effective on Oct 15 and is optional to private hospitals.

"It is up to them to increase the cost beyond what we have gazetted but they cannot go more than 25%.

"If they do, patients can file a complaint with us," Dr Hilmi added.

Earlier, he launched the World Medical Tourism Exhibition and Conference, themed "Manifold Healthcare with Indulgent Experience, Cultural Exposure and Economic Impact".

"Malaysia has great appeal for markets with consumers seeking halal-compliant options and environments.

"This, coupled with the favourable exchange rate, makes Malaysia an ideal healthcare travel destination," Dr Hilmi said in his speech at the conference.

Some 300 delegates from the medical tourism industry attended the event.