Sarawak to boost medical tourism

LUCRATIVE: Beach resort to become post-treatment facility, says minister

SARAWAK is set to boost medical tourism in the state with the upgrading of a beach resort with pre- and post-treatment facilities among the ideas mooted.

State Tourism Minister Datuk Abang Johari Openg said the Damai Beach Resort, 30km from here, with fresh air and a relaxing environment by the beach, was suitable for patients who were seeking comfort during their recovery process.

He said such facilities would complement the state government’s efforts to enhance the quality of medical services in Sarawak.

"Instead of going back to the hospital for post-treatment such as physiotherapy, we hope to offer this kind of service at a resort as it is more comfortable and less stressful.

"I believe nobody loves going in and out of hospital."

Speaking at Sarawak General Hospital’s Hari Raya celebration here yesterday, Abang Johari said he had directed Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) to study the possibility of such an idea as certain countries did offer such services.

“I learnt about the concept from the Maldives, which is well-known for its beaches, but also includes such services in their resorts and villas. (This is something) we can do as well,” he said.

He said medical tourism had contributed to an increase in tourists and income to the state in the past few years.

“We have attracted tourists from neighbouring countries, especially Indonesia. In the past, most of them were from Pontianak, but now we have many from Jakarta who come here for medical treatment,” he said, adding that the high value of the Singapore dollar had diverted some medical tourists from Indonesia to Sarawak.

Abang Johari said the potential for medical tourism in the state had pushed two private hospitals here to expand to cater to more patients.

"There is an ongoing negotiation to set up a new private specialist hospital. This is with a foreign medical group but we are negotiating, so I cannot reveal too many details,” he said.