

MEDICAL TOURISM

# Private hospitals welcome border reopening

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Private hospitals welcome the reopening of borders on April 1 as it will revitalise the medical tourism sector.

Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia president Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh yesterday said the Covid-19 pandemic had reduced the number of medical tourists in the last two years, particularly those from neighbouring countries.

"Patients from the region who frequently seek treatment in Malaysia have been requesting options to get back into our private hospitals to recommence treatment or seek new therapies, particularly in Penang, Melaka and the Klang Valley.

"Our treatment cost is one of the cheapest in the region.

"Hence, private hospitals saw



*Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh*

an increase of medical tourists in 2019 to about 1.22 million.

"We have doubled the number of medical tourists since 2011 as we are able to provide world-class treatment at affordable prices compared to other Asian countries."

Dr Kuljit said medical tourism had boosted the level of private medical care in Malaysia, and industry players recently achieved an understanding with the government to treat public patients at a negotiated cost.

"This has benefited citizens who cannot afford private treatment when there is a shortage of capacity in public hospitals.

"However, this programme is ongoing and is well-regulated and controlled by the Health Ministry," he said.

He said private hospitals would strictly adhere to standard operating procedures set by the Health Ministry to stem any rise in Covid-19 transmissions due to

medical tourists.

Unvaccinated medical tourists, he said, would be subjected to mandatory quarantine.

He said he hoped for the participation of private hospitals with the government to continue managing Covid-19 cases during the endemic phase.

This cooperation, he said, should include various levels, from vaccination to treating full-paying Covid-19 patients, as it would ease the burden of the public service.

"In addition to the government's support, we hope the insurance industry will also step in to assist patients with Covid-19.

"The approval of antiviral drugs for treatment of Covid-19 patients should also be extended to private hospitals as there is a huge number of Covid-19 patients seeking care at private hospitals, including for 'long Covid' care."