



(From left) St John Ambulance Malaysia chief operating officer Burnard Yee Kim Thong, National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia medical director Dr K. Sivashanker, SP Setia Foundation chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye and SP Setia Bhd chief financial officer Raymond Yap with the RM600,000 mock cheque yesterday.

## Concern over rising kidney patients

**PETALING JAYA:** There are 18,000 kidney patients undergoing haemodialysis treatment in the country and the number is expected to rise to 20,000 in two years.

National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia medical director Dr K. Sivashanker said the trend was worrying as every year between 2,500 and 3,000 Malaysians were diagnosed with kidney failure.

"There were only 3,698 people undergoing dialysis in 1996 and now it has soared to 18,000," he said at the launch of the haemodialysis subsidy programme by SP Setia Foun-

dation yesterday.

The foundation has pledged RM600,000 annually to subsidise kidney patients from low-income families in need of haemodialysis treatment, a move Dr Sivashanker described as timely.

It costs a patient RM110 per treatment at a non-profit haemodialysis centre.

He said the Health Ministry provided a subsidy of RM50 per treatment for households earning less than RM5,000 a month.

He said on average, a kidney patient needed to undergo three treatments a week

which amounts to RM780 per month. If additional treatment is required, the bill can come up to RM1,500 a month.

The foundation's chairman, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye, said they had always been sensitive to Malaysians who found it difficult to pay for their medical treatment.

"Every year we set aside RM4 million to help the needy.

"Now we pledge RM600,000 every year to help at least 100 poor kidney patients undergo dialysis free of charge at 28 non-profit haemodialysis centres in the Klang Valley, Penang and Johor."