

Over 15,000 in limbo for want of organ donors

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 15,000 Malaysians are waiting for organ transplants as not enough Malaysians are signing up as donors.

Statistics from the Health Ministry show that only 188,147 or 0.66 per cent of Malaysians were registered as donors, a far cry from the world's highest, which has 35 donors per million population and even that of Singapore, which has five donors per million population.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, in his speech to observe World Kidney Day 2012 at Dataran Merdeka yesterday, said the number of kidney patients undergoing dialysis treatment had tripled in 10 years, from 7,837 patients in 2001 to 22,932 patients in 2010.

"Between 2001 and 2010, the government allocated RM17.1 million in the form of subsidies for haemodialysis treatment to non-government bodies.

"The government also allocated RM20.15 million in the form of a capital grant to non-government dialysis centres to buy new haemodialysis machines.

"This has benefited more than

23,000 patients," he said, adding that this was the government's commitment to help patients tackle challenges posed by the "silent disease".

He said government efforts to create greater organ donation awareness had helped record 47 cadaveric organ and tissue donations last year — the highest since 1975.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said Malaysians must do more to take care of their health by exercising and practising healthy eating habits as non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, were on the rise.

He said last year, 15.2 per cent of Malaysians aged 18 and below suffered from diabetes compared with 11.6 per cent in 2006. More than 32.7 per cent of citizens aged 18 and above were also found to have high blood pressure compared with 32.2 per cent in 2006.

"Although the best form of treatment for those with kidney failure is an organ transplant, many are forced to wait for organs for a long time and go for dialysis treatment instead because of the low number of organ donors."

Liow said the Health Ministry had formed the National Transplant



Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin signing a living organ donation plaque in conjunction with World Kidney Day 2012 at Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur yesterday. On the right is Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin. Pic by Syarafiq Abd Samad

Council and National Transplant Technical Committee to spearhead transplant development, strengthen the National Transplant Resource Centre to streamline the organ procurement process, step up

its organ donation awareness campaign and form an Organ Donation Awareness Promotion Action Committee, now chaired by Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye.

Present were Deputy Health Min-

ister Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin, Lee, National Kidney Foundation chairman Datuk Dr Zaki Morad Mohamad Zaher and Malaysian Society of Nephrology president Dr Wong Hin Seng.