

Transplant units for govt hospitals

Departments will help cut waiting time for those waiting for organs, says Jeyaindran

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PETALING JAYA: Special transplant units will be set up in major government hospitals to cut the waiting time for organ transplants.

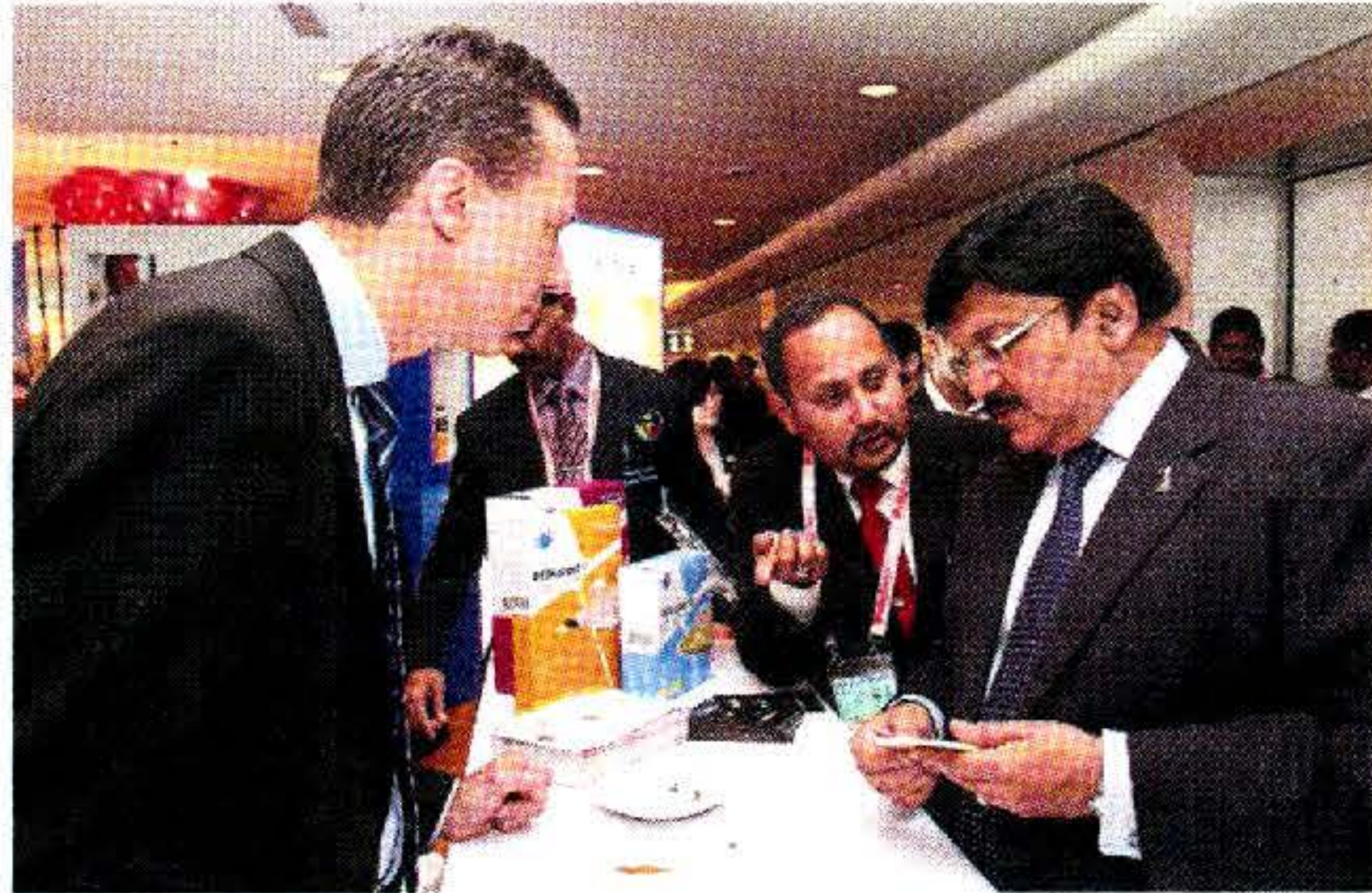
Health Ministry (medical) deputy director-general Datuk Dr Jeyaindran Sinnadurai said the ministry was doing this in stages.

"Only major hospitals will have these dedicated transplant units.

"Such units will require a big, dedicated team of specialists and they must tend to a large number of cases each year," he told *The Star*.

Over 20,000 people are on the waiting list for organ transplants.

On which hospitals would be involved, Dr Jeyaindran said the ministry was still working out the details of the plan.



Important mission: Dr Jeyaindran (right) at the International Wound and Biotherapy Conference.

He was asked to comment on a proposal by the National Kidney Foundation Malaysia (NKF) for special transplant units to be formed in government hospitals.

NKF chairman Datuk Dr Zaki

Morad Mohd Zahed said dedicated teams would be a boon to transplant patients on the waiting list.

"In many advanced countries like the United Kingdom and Australia, there is a department for transplant

surgery for the liver, kidney and so on.

"This means that there are dedicated experts to do the job. But in Malaysia, our doctors such as urologists also have to juggle other procedures, like removing kidney stones," he said.

Even though about 300,000 Malaysians have pledged to donate their organs after death, the actual number of donations made a year is low.

Sunday Star recently reported that Malaysians in need of organ transplants were resorting to getting them in countries like China and India.

To deter such trading, the Organ and Tissue Transplantation Bill was drafted and is currently with the Attorney-General's Chambers for further deliberation.

Dr Zaki said NKF welcomed the new law to ban organ trading, adding that the Bill also ensured that surgeons performing transplants were properly qualified.

"The law also makes it compulsory for such procedures to be reported to the national registry for transplants," he said.

He said Malaysia's organ donation rate was low compared with countries like Spain and the United Kingdom.

On the opt-out policy that is practised by countries like Singapore, Dr Zaki said there was no need to impose such a move in Malaysia if there was a change of mindset among the people.

"There are countries with no opt-out policy but have a high donor rate because the public is willing to cooperate," he said.