

Group: Govt should pay more attention to rural areas

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PETALING JAYA: The National Kidney Foundation chairman Datuk Dr Zaki Morad called upon the Health Ministry to approve applications to set up new kidney dialysis centres in rural areas.

"In rural areas, patients need to travel long distances, up to three times a week, to the nearest dialysis centre and this is a burden for many.

"We need more centres in smaller populated rural locations, especially in Sabah and

Sarawak," said Dr Zaki.

He said investors would not be interested in setting up dialysis centres in many rural locations because it was not possible to turn in a profit with the sparse populations.

"We should consider setting up more centres via partnerships between the government and non-profit organisations," said Dr Zaki, adding that the centres must also be run efficiently, using the machines to treat more people.

He said that although one machine could cater to six patients, many centres only served three to four patients per machine.

For three patients in Sabah, getting to haemodialysis treatment is a two-hour boat ride followed by another two hours on a four-wheel drive vehicle to the nearest district hospital.

The patients, including an 11-year-old child from the remote interior settlement of Pagalungan in the Pensiangan district undergo this process each time they need treatment.

State Assistant Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry Datuk Sairin Karno said they would have to take a boat to Sapulut before hopping on board a four-wheel drive vehicle to the Keningau district hospital, adding that

the journey was only possible if the weather was fine.

Sairin, who is Liawan assemblyman, said the Keningau hospital had six haemodialysis machines but they were insufficient.

"We have asked the authorities to provide machines to smaller hospitals such as the one in Nabawan.

"This will make the treatment more accessible to rural folk," he said.

He said the Welfare Department should also provide financial aid to kidney patients from remote areas who have to travel to towns to get haemodialysis treatment.