

Health Ministry hopes for 'caring' Budget 2017

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry is looking to cut costs in procuring medicine and equipment but hopes the new Budget will not be any less than the last one.

Its 2016 budget was slashed by 10% during a revision earlier this year, losing nearly RM250mil.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya said despite

having to operate under budget constraints this year, the ministry would be happy if Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak maintained the 2016 allocation in next year's Budget.

"Hopefully we get the same amount as last year. Nothing less.

"We managed to cut down things like travelling, but we cannot cut salaries and we have to continue to give service to the rakyat the best we can," he told reporters after

attending Getz Healthcare Malaysia's launch at the PJCT Industrial Zone yesterday.

He said they were considering upping the use of generic medicine and leasing medical equipment.

Generic drugs are copies of brand-name drugs that have the same dosage and effects as the original medicine.

Generic medicine is tested for bioequivalency, so governments know they will give the same bene-

fits to patients as the original medicine.

"Now we use almost half generic medicine, half original medicine.

"As for equipment, we are trying to buy in phases.

"If we need 10 machines, we just buy three or four first.

"We are also looking into renting so we can slowly pay over a few years," he said.

Among machines the ministry is lacking are computerised tomogra-

phy (CT) scanners, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines and ultrasound scanners.

Dr Hilmi said some assets in government hospitals were 10 to 15 years old and were prone to breakdowns.

"Already our waiting time is long; if the machines continue to break down, the waiting time will be longer," he said.

Najib is scheduled to table Budget 2017 in Parliament on Oct 21.