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Community effort needed to fight TB, says minister

KUALA LUMPUR: The community needs to play a more active role in the war against communicable diseases like tuberculosis which is making a comeback, Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said.

The Health Minister said without commitment from the public, the private sector and NGOs, it would be difficult for the Government to eliminate such diseases.

"I want to see the private sector and more NGOs take up the disease burden as part of their corporate social responsibility.

"If everyone does their part, it will be easier to control it from spreading," he said when opening the Malaysian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis annual general meeting here last night.

Earlier, he said the number of tuberculosis cases in the country had risen from 15,912 in 2003 to 19,337 last year.

He said the rising number of both foreign workers from countries with high tuberculosis cases and HIV/AIDS patients was the main reason for its re-emergence.

Earlier in Putrajaya, Liow said people with depression should seek immediate treatment and not suppress it out of shame or fear of being stigmatised.

"Many of them are ashamed of seeing the doctor to treat their condition. They would rather hide it," he said after launching the MySihat programme here.

Liow said depression was common among the people although the severity of their condition varied.