

Govt may regulate fertility treatment

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■ **By Annie Freeda Cruz**
anniefc@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry is planning to regulate assisted reproductive technology (ART) in view of the growing number of medical facilities, both public and private, offering treatment to couples with fertility problems.

Director-general Dr Ismail Merican said the ministry's medical practice division was finalising a draft of the ART Act, which would be similar to the Human Embryology and Fertility Act in the United Kingdom.

It will include provisions for the scrutiny, licensing and auditing of ART centres to ensure that only qualified and competent personnel are allowed to treat patients.

All ART laboratories, a vital cog in the wheel of reproductive medicine, will have to adhere to standard operating procedures. They will have to be accredited and licensed to prevent the abuse of fertility procedures and other related activities.

He said ART methods used must guard against any mixing of genes.

"Every newborn child must relate unequivocally to a bio-

logical and legal father and mother. An accurate, fool-proof system of documentation must be in place to guard against the mixing of lineages and commercialism."

A National Advisory Committee on ART, under the deputy director-general of health (medical), is to be set up to develop the sub-speciality and oversee policy matters pertaining to ART services, Dr Ismail told the 1st National Reproductive Medicine Congress yesterday.

It will establish guidelines and standard operating procedures to be used by government and private hospitals.