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MAHATHIR-DOCTORS
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KUALA LUMPUR, FEB 25 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY EXPRESSED REGRET OVER THE ATTITUDE OF SOME JUNIOR DOCTORS WHO REFUSE TO TOUCH THEIR PATIENTS FOR SO-CALLED RELIGIOUS REASONS AND TOLD THEM TO LEAVE THE PROFESSION.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THIS UNHEALTHY DEVELOPMENT HAD EMERGED IN THE COUNTRY, WITH SOME YOUNG DOCTORS CARRYING OUT EXAMINATION OF THEIR PATIENTS WITH THE HELP OF A PENCIL BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THAT TOUCHING ANOTHER PERSON WAS AGAINST ISLAMIC TEACHINGS.

+I READ IN A NEWSPAPER THAT SOME JUNIOR DOCTORS ARE REFUSING TO TOUCH PATIENTS. A NUMBER AMONG THEM ARE USING PENCILS FOR EXAMINING THEIR PATIENTS ON GROUNDS THAT ISLAM FORBIDS THE TOUCHING OF ANOTHER PERSON'S BODY,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS OPENING THE \$16 MILLION TAWAKAL MEDICAL SPECIALIST CENTRE -- A PRIVATE MEDICAL ORGANIZATION -- IN JALAN PAHANG HERE.

HE SAID SUCH DOCTORS WERE NOT GENUINE DOCTORS BECAUSE THEY WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THEIR OWN INTERESTS THAN WITH HELPING THE SICK.

+WHETHER A DOCTOR GOES TO HEAVEN OR NOT DEPENDS NOT ON HIS TOUCHING THE BODY OF A PATIENT BUT ON HOW WELL HE TREATS A PATIENT AS A DOCTOR,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE DID NOT WANT THIS UNWANTED ATTITUDE TO SPREAD AS IT WAS CONTRARY TO ISLAMIC TEACHINGS WHICH REQUIRED EVERY DOCTOR TO TREAT A PATIENT TO THE BEST OF HIS ABILITY.

+IF A DOCTOR DOES NOT WISH TO TOUCH A PATIENT, IT WILL BE BETTER FOR HIM TO GIVE UP BEING A DOCTOR AS THE MEDICAL PROFESSION CALLS FOR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTORS AND PATIENTS.

+THE CLOSER THE RELATIONSHIP THE BETTER. A DOCTOR CANNOT BE CALLED ONE IF HE DOES NOT WANT TO TOUCH A PATIENT AT ALL,+ HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WAS STRANGE FOR DOCTORS TO REFUSE TO TOUCH THEIR PATIENTS IN THIS MODERN ERA WHEN DURING THE TIME OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD IT WAS WOMEN WHO TREATED THE WOUNDS OF THE MANY INJURED MUSLIM SOLDIERS ENGAGED IN THE UHUD WAR, AND SURELY THEY WOULD HAVE HAD TO TOUCH THESE MEN TO ADMINISTER TREATMENT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE MEDICAL PROFESSION TEACHES A DOCTOR THAT IT IS PART OF THE TREATMENT TO PLACE HIS HEALING HANDS ON THE PATIENT.

THE PATIENT WOULD THEN FEEL THAT HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE ONE WHO IS GOING TO TREAT HIM.

+WHEN A MOTHER PLACES HER PALM ON HER CHILD'S FOREHEAD TO FEEL FOR FEVER, THE ACT IN ITSELF IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON THAT WE ALL NOW UNDERSTAND.

+BUT IF SHE WERE TO USE A PENCIL, I AM NOT SO SURE THAT WE WILL FEEL GOOD,+ HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON DOCTORS ENGAGED IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE WHO DID NOT WANT TO TOUCH THEIR PATIENTS TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDE.

+IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT EFFICIENT AND POPULAR DOCTORS WHO DO NOT USE THE PENCIL ARE LEAVING GOVERNMENT SERVICE TO OPEN PRIVATE CLINICS. AND, THE PRACTICE OF USING A PENCIL DOES NOT HAPPEN IN THE

PRIVATE SECTOR FOR WHO WOULD WANT TO SEE A DOCTOR WITH SUCH AN ATTITUDE?+ HE ASKED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGED PRIVATISATION, TOO MANY DOCTORS HAD NOT LEFT GOVERNMENT SERVICE BECAUSE THE SERVICES OF SPECIALISTS WERE STILL REQUIRED.

HE SAID THAT AS RESPONSIBLE PERSONS IN SOCIETY, PRIVATE SPECIALISTS COULD SERVE AS PART-TIME OR VOLUNTARY LECTURERS FOR HOUSEMEN OR PROVIDE PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR HOUSEMEN AT THEIR CLINICS.

+WHEN I WAS PRACTISING IN ALOR SETAR, I USED TO GET STUDENTS WANTING TO LEARN THE DUTIES OF A DOCTOR AND I USED TO TAKE THEM ALONG WHEN I WENT TO EXAMINE MY PATIENTS.

+WE MUST GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET USEFUL TRAINING AND BE EXPOSED TO THE FIELD THEY WILL EVENTUALLY ENGAGE IN. WE MUST NOT EMPHASISE ON THE MONEY THAT CAN BE MADE FROM A PRIVATE CLINIC SO MUCH SO AS TO DISCOURAGE THE ASPIRING DOCTORS FROM SERVING WITH THE GOVERNMENT,+ HE SAID.

THE RAJA MUDA OF SELANGOR, THE WIFE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, HEALTH MINISTER DATUK CHIN HON NGIAN AND PULAU PINANG CHIEF MINISTER DR LIM CHONG EU WERE PRESENT AT THE FUNCTION. -- BERNAMA

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