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MAHATHIR-NURSE
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KUALA LUMPUR, FEB 23 (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT IS GIVING ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM OF SHORTAGE OF NURSES, A NEW PHENOMENON AFFECTING THE WORLD, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE SHORTAGE WAS CAUSED BY SEVERAL FACTORS, HE ADDED, CITING, AS AN EXAMPLE, THE LUCRATIVE JOBS OFFERED BY RICH COUNTRIES TO ATTRACT FOREIGN NATIONALS TO WORK IN THEIR MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.

HE SAID THAT IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, THE PEOPLE WERE RELUCTANT TO WORK AS NURSES BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID OF CONTRACTING CERTAIN DEADLY DISEASES WHICH WERE SPREADING IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

+BECAUSE OF THESE REASONS, OFFERS OF WORK FOR NURSES FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HAVE INCREASED RAPIDLY,+ HE ADDED WHEN LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR THE NATIONAL HEART INSTITUTE BUILDING HERE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS INCAPABLE OF MATCHING THE HIGH SALARIES BEING OFFERED AND THE COUNTRY WAS LIKELY TO LOSE LOCAL NURSES WHO COULD HAVE FILLED VITAL POSTS BEING CREATED IN NURSING INSTITUTES. -- MORE

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THIS SITUATION WAS ALSO LIKELY TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO RECRUIT NURSES FROM COUNTRIES LESS DEVELOPED THAN MALAYSIA, HE ADDED.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO ALLOW PRIVATE MEDICAL CENTRES TO RECRUIT NURSES FROM OVERSEAS SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT PINCH GOVERNMENT NURSES.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID THE PEOPLE SHOULD CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDE AND BE PREPARED TO FACE NEW PROBLEMS IN THE FORM OF DISEASES WHICH AFFECTED THE NATION.

+THE FORM OF DISEASES WE FACE AT PRESENT IS SIMILAR TO THE PATTERN IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,+ HE ADDED.

AMONG THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IS THE RISE IN CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES, WHICH WAS THE MAIN CAUSE OF DEATH IN MALAYSIA, AND NO LONGER MALARIA, CHOLERA OR TUBERCULOSIS, HE SAID.

THE NATIONAL HEART INSTITUTE, WHICH WILL HAVE THE MOST MODERN MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, WILL SERVE AS THE MAIN REFERENCE CENTRE TO TREAT HEART PATIENTS, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

IT WILL ALSO BE A TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTRE IN THE FIELD OF CARDIOLOGY AND CARDIO-THORAXIC SURGERY APART FROM PROVIDING HEALTH EDUCATION TO SOCIETY ON THE PREVENTION AND RECUPERATION OF HEART PATIENTS. -- MORE

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HE SAID THE HEALTH MINISTRY HAD DRAWN UP A COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTIVE PROGRAMME TO CHECK THE SPREAD OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES.

+IT IS OUR HOPE THAT WITH THIS PREVENTIVE PROGRAMME COUPLED WITH A HIGH QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE TREATMENT PROGRAMME, WE CAN CREATE A HEALTHIER SOCIETY,+ THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

HEALTH MINISTER ENCIK NG CHENG KIAT, WHO ALSO SPOKE, SAID HEART AND CARDIO-VASCULAR DISEASES INCREASED BY 52 PER CENT BETWEEN 1980 AND 1988.

IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, 29 PER CENT OF DEATHS IN 1988 WERE DUE TO HEART AND CARDIO-VASCULAR DISEASES, HE ADDED.

THE INSTITUTE WILL HAVE FOUR OPERATING THEATRES AND 255 BEDS INCLUDING 30 IN THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT.

IT HOPES TO PERFORM 1,200 OPEN HEART SURGERIES AND 300 OTHER TYPES OF SURGERIES ANNUALLY.

EARLIER REPORTS SAID THE \$65 MILLION INSTITUTE WOULD BE BUILT JOINTLY BY AN AUSTRIAN COMPANY AND A LOCAL FIRM. -- BERNAMA
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