

▼20/05/09-58MST

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Mahathir-Hospitals (With pix)

MAHATHIR REMINDS PRIVATE HOSPITALS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 20⁹³ (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the commercial and social aspects of the role played by private hospitals must go hand in hand.

Although profits were important, private hospitals must possess a sense of consideration and social responsibility if they wished to be regarded with respect by the community and nation, he added.

"There is a place for private hospitals in Malaysia now and in the future but the commercial aspect of this role must go hand in hand with the social aspect," he said when opening a seminar on "The Role of Private Hospitals in Malaysia: Present and Future", organised by the Association of Private Hospitals, here.

Reminding private doctors not to forget the "Hippocratic Oath", he said the practice of rejecting emergency cases because the patient could not provide a deposit was not in keeping with the medical profession.

"At the very least, emergency treatment should be given. Although this would result in a slight fall in earning at the end of the month, it should be considered as part of costs," he added. -- more

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Mahathir-Hospitals 2 Kuala Lumpur

He believed a slight dip in income would not pose a major problem considering that the income of private medical specialists was four to five times that of similarly qualified experts in government service.

He said the government welcomed the setting up of private hospitals which would help reduce the financial burden borne by the government and demands posed by the increasing number of people concerned about their health.

Those who could afford it now had a choice of medical treatment although the costs were high, he added.

"Seen from one aspect, the high cost cannot be afforded by many medium income earners but the increase in earnings of private hospitals enable them to acquire the latest and sophisticated equipment, he said.

As such, he hoped the quality of medical treatment and expertise of private doctors could be upgraded to match those of world experts and enable them to offer their services to patients from abroad.

This would not only contribute to the economy of the country but also make Malaysia and its medical expertise more well-known. -- more

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Mahathir-Hospitals 3 Kuala Lumpur

At the same time, Dr Mahathir said the government did not wish to see litigation-consciousness among the people lead to excessive claims for compensation as it would result in galloping cost of treatment brought about by higher insurance premiums for doctors and hospitals.

He said there were times doctors avoided treating emergency cases for fear of being sued for damages by patients arising out of the treatment they received and this would be to the detriment of the community.

Reminding doctors against negligence, he said they should provide the best treatment irrespective of a patient's ability to pay.

"Don't carry out diagnosis with sophisticated and expensive equipment simply to charge more or avoid prosecution for negligence," he added.

He also frowned on the practice of "fee-splitting" among some doctors, unnecessary checkups and surgery and ambulance-chasing with lawyers to get business.

Dr Mahathir noted the vast gap in wages of private sector doctors and nurses and those in government service which he said posed a huge problem for government. -- more

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Mahathir-Hospitals 4 (last) Kuala Lumpur

He said it was very easy to propose that government doctors and nurses be increased but it would also trigger similar claims by other categories of workers in the public service.

This would result in higher government expenditure but the gap would remain when the salaries of doctors and nurses were increased further, he added.

Thus, attempts to narrow the wage gap would benefit no one, he said.

He said the problem of doctors and nurses quitting government service could be overcome only if the number of doctors and specialists increased to a level which brought about keen competition among private sectors doctors.

"If there is no apparent increase in the number of doctors produced, the government would have to allow foreign doctors to come in and work with the government or private hospitals or even to set up private practice," he said.

Later, speaking to reporters, he said recruitment of foreign medical experts was unavoidable because Malaysians were unable to pursue studies for up to six years to become doctors.

It was also necessary as the government had to consider not only the interests of the medical profession but those of the people, he added. --

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