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Mahathir-Health

DON'T BUILD ONLY "FIVE-STAR" HOSPITALS, PRIVATE SECTOR TOLD

KUALA RMLUMPUR, May 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the private sector to build hospitals for the poorer section of the population, saying existing private medical centres tend to stress on five-star accomodation.

"An ordinary class private hospital should be as lucrative for Malaysian investors," the Prime Minister said when tabling the Seventh Malaysia Plan (7MP) in the Dewan Rakyat.

He said that even within private hospitals, there must be elements of cross-subsidy so that those who could not afford could have equally good medical treatment without the need for luxurious accomodations.

Dr Mahathir said the medical profession should not stress on financial considerations alone.

"Society owes a lot to the practitioners of medicine, but the affulence of the professionals owe a lot to the kind of society we have. There must always be gratefulness and charity in our hearts," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that under the 7MP, the Government would continue to expand and upgrade health programmes and services so as to enable Malaysians to enjoy a better quality of life.

But he added that it was becoming more difficult for the Government to provide free or nominally charged hospital treatment.

This, he said, is not just because the cost had risen tremendously but also because it was difficult to retain doctors and nurses at the low pay the Government could offer.

The Prime Minister said that in the future, medical treatment provided at Government hospitals must either be paid for through medical insurance or a private medical treatment schemes.

He added that the Government intends to privatise many of the health facilities including hospitals and specialist units.

"Some kind of subsidy will be worked out for the poor whose employers cannot pay for their medical care or who cannot afford health insurance," he said. -- BERNAMA

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