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Chua-specialists

MANY MALAYSIAN DOCTORS ABROAD WISH TO RETURN

SUNGAI PETANI, Jan 18 (Bernama) -- Many of the more than 1,000 Malaysian medical specialists who have migrated are keen to return home to work, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today.

He said this was a most encouraging development at a time when the country badly needed the services of more medical specialists, especially from Malaysians abroad.

Chua said he would meet Public Services Commission Chairman Tan Sri Mahmud Taib tomorrow to discuss effective ways of attracting the specialists to government hospitals.

"Among the matters to be raised is the shortening of the period to process their applications and qualifications before being accepted to work on a contract basis," he told reporters after opening the Metro Specialist Hospital, a private hospital here.

Chua said the period to determine the salary scheme and process application, sometimes stretching up to 15 months, was among the factors that put off the specialists from returning home to work.

He said previous experience showed that the specialists were not prepared to wait too long to get a reply from the Health Ministry.

Chua said there was an urgent need to ensure that the country did not continue to be deprived of the services of these professionals which were also sought after by other countries including developed countries.

He said many Malaysian doctors and specialists were working in Singapore, Australia, the United States, Britain, Canada, Taiwan and Japan.

Efforts to woo the specialists is in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to the Malaysian workforce that had migrated to return home to work at a time when the country was striving to be a developed nation.

Asked to comment on the recent statement by the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) that the Health Ministry was not concerned over the welfare of plantation workers, Chua said it was baseless accusation.

He said the MMA should know that the ministry provided proper facilities to everyone irrespective of whether they were plantation workers, rural fishermen or officers in big towns.

Reports on plantation workers show that 89 per cent of them used the services of government maternity and child clinics, he said, adding that the MMA report itself indicated so.

In his speech earlier, Chua said the Metro Specialist Hospital was among 11 private hospitals in Kedah and 197 throughout the country.

He advised private hospitals not to take advantage of rising demand for medical treatment to raise their charges. -- Bernama