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MMA-Charges

PRIVATE HOSPITALS SHOULD REVIEW SALARIES, SAYS MMA

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) endorses the call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for private hospitals to charge Malaysians less, its president Dr Milton Lum said today.

Dr Lum said there was an urgent need for private hospitals to review their operations and salary structures which constitute "a very significant component" of their expenditure.

He said doctors' fees account for only a fraction of the total bill and they have only limited say on the charges.

"On each occasion a new private hospital opens, salaries on non-doctor staff are increased in the efforts to recruit staff and the private hospitals already in existence are under pressure to increase the terms and benefits to retain staff," he said in a statement in response to the call by Dr Mahathir yesterday.

This has resulted in a situation where many nursing staff in private hospitals receive salaries that are more than that of medical officers in the public sector.

Dr Lum said that investors in private hospitals should look at their investment from a long-term perspective and not expect returns within the first few years as in other industries.

Almost all specialists practising in private hospitals are not salaried but reimbursed by professional charges which are usually in accordance with the 1992 MMA fee schedule as a guideline, he said.

Meanwhile, Gerakan central committee member Dr S.Vijayarajam, in supporting Dr Mahathir's call, said medical practitioners and other professionals should charge lesser fees.

"Professionals who are generally better off, should show their willingness to sacrifice something in view of the current economic difficulties and absorb cost to some extent," he said in a statement. --

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