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PRIVATE HOSPITALS URGED TO REDUCE CHARGES FOR MALAYSIANS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on medical charges to be reduced for Malaysians using private hospitals.

"Please give discounts to Malaysian patients whose incomes have already diminished by 45 percent," he said at the opening of the Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre in Jalan Ampang.

The prime minister said private hospitals could impose higher charges on foreigners as the ringgit's depreciation had raised their affordability.

"At the Cabinet meeting today, the health minister, Datuk Chua Jui Meng said pressure was mounting on government hospitals to accept more patients as they could not afford the charges of private hospitals."

Dr Mahathir also called on medical practitioners to take a salary cut to bring down the operating costs of hospitals.

He said Malaysians should now learn to be thrifty and live with less than what they use to have.

"We are not facing a recession now but if we are not careful we may be in a recession," the prime minister added. -- BERNAMA

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