

23 SEP 1997

Fuchs-Confident

US DON CONFIDENT IN MALAYSIA'S HEALTH CARE POLICY

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 23 (Bernama) -- A United States don today expressed confidence in Malaysia's capacity to develop its own health care policy to accommodate all levels of its population as it emerges as a developed nation.

Stanford University Professor Emeraitus Victor Fuchs said every country Malaysia included should have its own mechanism of gathering resources, whether from direct contributions or from other channels, to finance primary health care as health care was not an ordinary commodity.

"There is no such thing as free medical care," Fuchs said when delivering the 1997 Perdana Lecture in conjunction with the inaugural Perdana Scholarship Award ceremony here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was among the 500 people who attended the lecture entitled "The Challenges to Health Policy in Modern Economies".

Dr Mahathir earlier presented the Perdana Scholarships to seven postgraduate students to enable them to pursue their studies abroad.

The 73-year-old economist said in the US, the Government made it compulsory for their physicians, who make recommendations for patients to be hospitalised in nursing homes, to pay the hospitalisation costs.

"In my country, 40 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is devoted to nursing home or medical equipments. This is unavoidable because as people want to live longer and better, they are willing to spend their high income to get the best medical care available."

"As people become more educated and are aware of the existence of the various aspects of health-care technological facilities, there is no longer willingness in our modern society to just accept diseases or disability without getting the best medical treatment," Fuchs said.

Later, when asked to comment on the proposed telemedicine technology to be introduced in Malaysia, when the Multimedia Super Corridor was fully implemented, he said while the technology could be useful, it might not be cost-effective.

"I am not saying it is not useful to the medical field but it is not really a wonderful thing unless you use it wisely. It may be useful to a big country like the US as it will enable patients from one end to communicate with their doctors at the other end," he said.

The students who received the scholarship are Aida Othman, Wan Haslina Hassan, Abdul Razak Abdul Aziz, Hasniza Mohd Hassan, Mohamad Fahmi Ngah, Yu Ei Leen and Lim Kian Tick.

The scholarship, under the Prime Minister's Fellowship Exchange Program -- a foundation established in 1995 -- is to promote educational excellence among Malaysians by encouraging learning and research in all fields of knowledge to help achieve the nation's goals towards Vision 2020.

Fuchs is a renowned expert in the field of healthcare whose works have influenced a new generation of health care professionals. He had written nine books, edited six others and published over a hundred articles. --

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