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PM: Don't depend too much on foreigners' services

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians would lose their freedom if they were too dependent on foreigners to provide important services.

At the opening of Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in Bandar Tun Razak today, the Prime Minister said the country was not against foreigners, but it was important for Malaysians to provide these services themselves.

"We should not be too concerned with getting good salaries to the extent foreigners have to provide the essential services," he said, adding that no developed country could maintain progress if it depended on "mercenaries".

Dr Mahathir said he was sad when, during his visit to a medical faculty overseas, Malaysian students complained about the low salary for doctors.

"They have yet to graduate, but have already thought about salary. While salary is important, the students should spend their time completing their studies rather than worry about the pay."

Those who are very concerned about getting high salaries should study the salary scales for doctors "and if they think it is too low, they can opt for other university courses that offer better pay".

Dr Mahathir said he was grateful that many doctors and specialists stayed on with the Government despite better salaries being offered by the private sector.

There are also specialists who continue to serve the Government even after the mandatory retirement age.

"I am thankful to them. If not, the majority of the government doctors will have to be foreigners."

He said Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia had successfully produced 3,000 doctors and 600 specialists since the medical faculty was established 26 years ago.

Dr Mahathir said it was time for HUKM to show its ability to develop new technologies and conduct medical research to enable it to become a specialist centre.

He reminded doctors and staff of HUKM to provide the best services, including nurturing a close rapport with patients.

"We must concentrate not only on treating the patients but also on taking care of them.

"The Malaysian health policy is to ensure a healthy public and not just to provide treatment.

"This strategy has made us well known as a country which allocates less than four per cent of the gross domestic product for health but enjoys a health standard almost equal to developed countries."

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