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Mahathir - pay

DON'T DEMAND TOO HIGH PAY, MAHATHIR TELLS CIVIL SERVANTS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded government servants against being too demanding for high pay to the extent of allowing foreigners run the country's essential services.

He said the government was aware that public sector jobs, including in the medical service, did not command as much pay as those in the private sector.

"I'm grateful that many doctors and specialists still opt to continue serving with the government despite not being paid that well," he said opening the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Hospital in Bandar Tun Razak here.

Dr Mahathir thanked retired specialists, who were not bothered about getting small salaries, for choosing to serve with the government.

Without them, he said, the majority of government doctors would comprise foreigners.

He said at the moment foreigners were increasingly employed as nurses in local hospitals.

The prime minister cautioned that no developed nation could sustain its progress if it is overly dependent on foreigners.

Dr Mahathir recalled a disappointing experience he had with Malaysian students he met while visiting overseas medical faculties who asked about the low pay for doctors back home.

He said it was saddening that these students, who were even unsure yet of graduating, have already been thinking of their pay.

"I do regard that income does matter much to anyone but while we are still studying let us concentrate on getting the qualification first before we start thinking of the pay.

"Or if we are too salary-conscious, then at the very outset we should go through the pay scale in the medical service. If we find it insufficient, we can choose to take up other disciplines which promise good income," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is a medical doctor, said the culture of medical service in several advanced countries has disintegrated as doctors neglected their community obligations and instead used their profession only to reap as much returns as possible.

"Their commitment to the patient is dictated by the fee that can be earned and individual attention is also influenced by the quantum of income," he said.

The prime minister said patients in the west, motivated by the desire to earn compensation which at times ran into millions of ringgit, were also litigious against doctors and hospitals suspected of negligence.

He said this prompted doctors and hospitals to exercise extra caution so much so that sophisticated examinations, which should be as a matter of routine, were side-stepped to avert charges of negligence during treatment.

This led to skyrocketing treatment costs thus depriving the poor access to medical care, he said.

"This is common in advanced countries. Patients become bankrupt because too sophisticated treatment costs too much," said Dr Mahathir.

According to Dr Mahathir, the situation in Malaysia was not that litigious and local lawyers did not coax patients into suing doctors or hospitals for compensations to be shared between the patient and counsel.

But this, he said, did not mean local doctors and hospitals could afford to be careless or should not strive to provide the best treatment since the medical profession serves the community.

However, Dr Mahathir said there were also doctors in developed countries, like those of France's Medecins Sans Frontieres, who dedicated their lives to humanitarian service.

"They purposely offer their service to developing countries facing medical problems or areas of armed conflicts.

"They don't take sides. They just want to cure and treat patients with modern medicine," he added.

-- BERNAMA

RAZ MAM rn