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Mahathir-Health

HEALTH SERVICE CENTRES SET UP TO ENSURE THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH, SAYS PM

MELAKA, Aug 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Barisan Nasional (BN) government will strive to ensure that health service centres including sophisticated hospitals are set up in the various corners of the country.

He said that the latest equipment would be installed at these centres even if they were expensive.

"We are prepared to set them up because they are essential for the people's health," he said when opening the extension block of the Melaka Hospital, here.

Dr Mahathir said that the government was prepared to shoulder the burden of meeting the increasing cost of treatment, to ensure the health of the people.

"The BN government is very sensitive over the health of the people. We are always prepared to spend huge sums of money for the treatment and the health of the people," he said.

The prime minister also praised private hospitals and clinics for playing their roles to ensure that the people were given treatment.

He however reminded private hospitals and clinics not to overly charge patients who are low-income earners.

He said that while the government wants private hospitals and clinics to prosper and progress, the welfare of those in the low-income group should not be neglected.

"Charges imposed on them should be moderate," he said.

Dr Mahathir also commended doctors serving in government hospitals for their willingness to serve even though their incomes were not lucrative.

Dr Mahathir said that the government understands their problem, in terms of their salaries, "but we cannot do anything".

"Even I cannot say much because some time ago, I also opened my own clinic," he said.

He told some 7,000 people at the hospital compound that the medical and hospital system was inherited from the British.

Thanking the British government which had provided free treatment to the locals when they were ruling the country, Dr Mahathir said that the cost of treatment and medication had increased so much that those in the low-income group could not afford them.

He however gave an assurance that the government would continue to assist people in this category to receive treatment in government hospitals.

"This is the responsibility of the BN government," he said.

Recently, the opposition proposed that the government call off its plan to privatise government hospitals, claiming that the move will pose a burden to those in the low-income group.

Dr Mahathir also said that he hoped the posts of nurses and doctors in government and private hospitals would be filled by the locals instead of foreigners as what was happening in many other countries.

In jest, he said that the BN government would not take into account the looks of those applying to become nurses.

This obviously referred to the recent statement by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat, who is PAS' Council of Scholars head, that the PAS-led Kelantan government may not appoint good-looking women to positions in the state government.

Dr Mahathir said the medical system in Malaysia was among the most advanced among the developing countries that many foreign doctors were prepared to serve in government hospitals.

The prime minister also said that the BN government did not seek credit for "this and that" projects including the construction of Putrajaya.

"Our wish is to serve the people and attain developed nation status in the year 2020," he said.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng, in his speech at the function, said that the new wing of the Melaka Hospital costing RM85 million was a project to benefit the people.

"It was still implemented even though the country experienced economic crisis because it is the government's policy to protect the interest of the people especially the poor and the unfortunate," he said.

He said that the government was very sensitive over the matter and had provided additional allocation.

This was to ensure that the social sector like education and health was in place and services needed by the people were not affected, he said.

Among those present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and state dignitaries.

-- BERNAMA

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