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Govt sticks to its decision on Anwar's surgery

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: The government will remain firm against sending Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim overseas for surgery on his slipped disc, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The prime minister said there is no need for his former deputy to go overseas when the procedure can be done by local medical personnel.

"Our doctors are capable and we have all the necessary equipment. So why does he want to go abroad so badly? After all, he is a convict. Why the privilege for him when even government officers get local medical treatment?"

"I'm a doctor myself ... this is all *karut* (nonsense) ... *bohong* (lies)," he said after a Workers' Day gathering for public servants here.

Mahathir was commenting on the appeal by a group of 107 high-profile individuals for Anwar to be given a choice

of medical treatment.

Mahathir said the government will stand its ground and not send Anwar overseas for the operation.

"There are others who also have backache ... he's not the only one. Don't tell me that there is only one doctor in this whole world who can treat his back pain," he said.

"Dr Thomas Hoogland had said that the equipment required could not enter a plane (to be transported) and that our operation room is like a kitchen. That is an insult. There is no equipment which cannot be transported by air."

Asked to comment on the anti-ISA campaign launched last night at the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall and which attracted more than 3,000 people, Mahathir replied: "Oh, congratulations to them."