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Mallot has maligned medical profession

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I CAME across an article in the Washington Post the other day. It was apparently a reply from the Malaysian Ambassador to the United States, Datuk Ghazzali Sheikh Abdul Khalid, to an earlier letter on Malaysia by former US Ambassador John Malott.

In essence, Malott's letter indicated that former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was gravely ill and that Malaysian doctors could be pressured politically not to give him proper treatment. In his letter, Ghazzali termed this suggestion "an unkind blow to the good reputation of the medical profession".

I understand that Ghazzali was restricted by diplomacy from registering a strong protest against Malott's insult of the Malaysian medical profession. But as a Malaysian with full confidence in the local medical profession, I take strong offence at Malott's suggestion.

Malott's exact words were: "A second concern is that Mr Anwar is a political prisoner who is a continuing nemesis of Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr) Mahathir Mohamad. Can one be certain that any operation performed in Malaysia ...is risk-free?"

It is unthinkable to me that Malott, as a former diplomat, could be so grossly unfair in his assessment and opinion of the Malaysian medical profession.

Medicine in the US may be ahead of Malaysia but surely our ethical practices cannot be questioned by someone who has actually lived in Malaysia before.

By suggesting that Malaysian doctors would compromise on professional ethics, for political reasons or otherwise, Malott has insulted not only local medical profession but the entire country.

Malott heaped further insult on Malaysia's doctors when he said that US embassy staff with serious medical problems are sent to Singapore for treatment, as Malaysia is not the best place.

If this is the diplomacy practised by the US, it is little wonder that it continues to breed discord and create enemies the world over.

Ghazzali was most diplomatic in his response but I hope that the Malaysian Medical Association will take a stronger stand in protecting the image and reputation of the country's medical profession.