

PM advises the poor and private hospitals

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KUALA LUMPUR: The poor have been told not to be selective in seeking medical treatment while private hospitals have been urged not to impose high charges.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last night that some people were unwilling to seek treatment from public hospitals, choosing instead to appeal for funds so that they could be treated at private hospitals.

The Prime Minister said this attitude was unjustified, as the doctors at public hospitals were just as good as their private sector counterparts, and the fees were often much lower, or not imposed at all.

"If you have the money, go to a private hospital.

"But if you don't have much money, go to a public hospital," he said at a dinner to celebrate Institut Jantung Negara's 10th anniversary at Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir who underwent a bypass operation in 1989 said he could have done it in the United States but preferred to have it done in Malaysia.

"If I had gone to the US, it would have cost the Government a lot in travel expenses, people to look after me and I would have had to pay the full fee for the opera-

tion.

"We must have faith in Malaysian doctors. This faith is justified and that is why I am still standing here talking to you.

"I can't believe it when I read newspapers and see how much money is needed for the operations. We should ask ourselves where the money is going.

"Either the fees are too high or the hospitals are making too much profit.

"The fees should be reasonable, and maybe they should forego all fees and whatever profits derived from the operations because we are dealing with poor people."

The poor, he said, had to literally beg for funds for their operations, adding that in most cases they could get donations but others were not so lucky.

He also said the people should not speculate over the issue of money donated to TV personality Ras Adiba Radzi who had to ask for donations to go for treatment in Australia after she became paralysed in July.

"She deserved to go to Australia because the doctors there knew best about her condition.

"I wish people would not question her about the money she received."