

Brain drain? No, says Dr. M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Acting Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamed, today denied reports that there was a brain drain from the University Hospital.

"As far as we are concerned there is no real brain drain and all vacant positions have been filled once an officer resigned," he said.

Dr Mahathir who is also Education Minister said this in a 30-minute interview with The Sunday Mail.

"Anyone with qualifications tends to be choosy and if he finds conditions not congenial, he will resign," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in the private sector there were several doctors who broke partnerships to open their own clinics or even join private hospitals which offered better conditions. This was not considered a brain drain.

"So, why should just a few resignations from the University Hospital be considered a brain drain?" he asked.

He said it would be lopsided to give statistics of the "so-called brain drain" without taking those of the private sector into consideration.

"I myself resigned from the Government medical practice and went into private practice," he said.

On the reported move by the Australian and British governments not to recognise Malaysian medical degrees, Dr Mahathir said it was not academically based but purely politically.

He said though there was no official confirmation on the non-recognition of our medical degrees, the reasons were not "because our standards were low".

"Our standards are equivalent to those of the other countries," he said.

He said there could

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Curbing smuggling

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be two reasons for such a move — one is to curb a brain drain from Malaysia and the other to protect their own doctors from being unemployed.

On smuggling along the border areas, Dr Mahathir said three major projects — erection of a \$3 million barb wire fencing, establishment of monitoring towers and the construction of checking bays — would be undertaken along the Malaysian-Thai border this year.

He said with the completion of the projects,

the various enforcement agencies would co-ordinate their work in the big drive against smuggling.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Essential Commodities said the first major project would be the erection of the 12-mile barb wire fencing along the Perlis-Thai border.

The fencing will make up of several layers of barb coils and would be from Padang Besar through the Chuping sugar plantation area where smuggling was currently rampant.