

It's only a matter of English, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. The decision by the United Kingdom General Medical Council (GMC) to withdraw full recognition for the University of Malaysia's medical degree has nothing to do with Bahasa Malaysia as the national language or teaching standards, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the GMC's decision to withdraw full recognition from Dec 31 this year only showed that it wanted medical graduates to be highly proficient in English.

"It is not casting aspersions on the national language or the varsity's standard of teaching," Dr Mahathir said.

"But it is necessary to upgrade language proficiency to

ensure students do not get into difficulties when they further their studies in the United Kingdom."

He was speaking to reporters after viewing dances performed by the Kedah cultural troupe at the old City Hall auditorium here.

The GMC, in a recent letter to the university said it would withdraw full recognition for the medical degree but would, however, accord limited recognition.

Dr Mahathir said a doctor had to read many journals, most of which were in English.

"Mastering English up to a certain level is necessary," he added.

On those who intended to pursue their medical studies in

England, Dr Mahathir said they would have to "brush up on their English".

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, viewed six traditional dances. The dances will be performed for the Commonwealth Heads of Government during their retreat in Langkawi in October.

Northern zone culture and tourism director Mohamed Bisharuddin Mohamed Noor Basha said the dances included the *terinai* and *layang emas* court performances.

The troupe will also perform the *cinta sayang*, *canggong*, *ayam didik* and the *jikir*.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry advised the public in a statement today not to be unduly worried over the action of the GMC.

Director-general of Health Datuk Dr Abdullah Abdul Rahman said the GMC decision would not affect the high standard of medical education and practice in the country.

Datuk Dr Abdullah said the Ministry was satisfied with medical training at the university.

"All medical graduates from Malaysian universities have to undergo a year's **compulsory** housemanship before they can practise medicine.

"This ensures the high standard of medical practice in Malaysia."

Datuk Dr Abdullah also said the limited recognition by the GMC would still allow medical students to do post-graduate studies in the United Kingdom.