

# Dr M: Healthy lifestyle vital

NST 20 JUN 1990

KUALA LUMPUR, Tue. — Health campaign programmes to check diseases like hepatitis B, cancer, diabetes and hypertension are being intensified, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said the programmes will emphasise a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical exercise, good personal hygiene, healthy dietary habits and well-adjusted family relationships.

"It is important for everyone to realise that the ultimate responsibility for one's own health, particularly the preventive aspect, lies with the individual," he told delegates attending the ninth regional conference of dermatology at a leading hotel here.

"I hope these programmes will help persuade the people on the importance of health and will be well received by everyone in our society."

Dr Mahathir said that while there was a need to explore new frontiers, existing health care programmes like the campaign against AIDS, must be strengthened and intensified.

He said steps had been taken to check and eliminate AIDS in Malaysia and new measures would be considered if necessary.

On dermatology, the Prime Minister said dermatologists were in demand as nine per cent of those who go for outpatient treatment had skin problems.

He said such patients "harassed" doctors with

their conditions because it was accepted that skin diseases, while not fatal, cannot be completely cured.

The Prime Minister said the country needed more dermatologists to cope with the increasing demand.

"It is altogether very frustrating for the doctor, although, of course, they can provide a lifetime income for the practitioner," he said.

Given this situation and new development and technology, Dr Mahathir called for more doctors to specialise in dermatology although the field has not been "glamorous or interesting enough" to attract life-long commitment.

He said the Government had identified new services to be developed in dermato-

logy, such as dermatopathology and photobiology, to ensure better skin care for the population.

He said Malaysian specialists could play a greater role in guiding and encouraging young doctors to pursue this specialisation.

Dr Mahathir said there was no proper control over the staggering number of chemicals and cosmetics flooding the market.

This left the Government with the task of coping with an increasing number of occupational diseases and contact dermatitis, he added.

He called for better remedial steps in ensuring enforcement, maintenance of high safety standards, and education for producers and consumers to prevent such diseases.