

# Govt to review policy on foreign doctors

By SHARIFF HAMID

THE Government will review its policy on foreign doctors working in the country, allowing them to work in private hospitals and even set up their own practices. The move is aimed at alleviating the shortage of doctors in both the public and private sectors.

At present, the policy allows them to serve only in government hospitals.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a detailed study will be undertaken to look into the regulations pertaining to the employment of foreign doctors. It is likely that certain restrictions will be imposed to safeguard the interest of local doctors.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said

the high fees charged by private hospitals and clinics have resulted in people flooding government hospitals which are already facing a shortage of doctors.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Second Obstetrics and Gynaecology Congress in Subang Jaya yesterday, the Prime Minister said lucrative offers made by the private sector have lured many doctors from government hospitals.

This is despite the fact that various facilities and incentives have been provided to encourage them to continue to serve the public sector, he added.

At present, there are 7,000 doctors in the country, with each doctor serving a population of 2,500

people. Of this figure, 3,800 are doctors working in the private sector.

On the possibility of increasing the pay for government doctors, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government cannot do so all the time as there are many constraints.

"If we were to increase their pay, we also have to increase the pay of employees in other sectors. This is one of the reasons why we cannot compete with the pay offered by the private sector," he said.

Earlier, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said medical specialists must keep abreast of latest developments in their respective fields to ensure they are capable of providing their best to patients.