

Govt won't raise doctors' wages to match private sector: Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the salaries of government doctors will not be increased to match those in the private sector.

He said this would not prevent them from joining the private service as private doctors could also increase their fees to get better income.

"The country's progress, expanding economy and people who are willing to pay high fees for private doctors have caused a shortage of doctors in government hospitals," the Prime Minister told reporters after accompanying Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah to the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) where she received an honorary doctorate in Medical Science.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government could not afford to increase the doctors' salaries as this would result in other civil servants clamouring for an increment.

"The only way is to increase the number of graduate doctors but many youths are not keen on taking up medicine as a profession because of the long duration of the course," he said, adding that students preferred to take up shorter courses instead.

He said Malaysian students should be prepared to make sacrifices and enter fields of study where

there was a shortage of professionals.

On allowing government doctors to serve in private hospitals and clinics, Dr Mahathir said the proposal was still being studied.

Earlier in her speech, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah said the country needed doctors who practised good and sound medicine, quality medicine and able to upgrade their performance.

"Modern equipment cannot replace skills, knowledge and good bedside manner," she said after receiving the honorary doctorate from the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, who is the university's Chancellor.

She encouraged young doctors to venture into new frontiers like geriatrics, environmental medicine, industrial medicine and rehabilitation medicine.

She said that in the past three and a half decades the six killers of children, including infectious diseases, had ceased to be a problem.

"In 1976, 39 diphtheria cases were reported while there were only 12 in 1990," she said.

"Even then the cases did not affect any children," she added.

"However ailments resulting from stress and unhealthy lifestyles and diets are increasing," she said.