

# Be prepared for challenges of 2020, Dr Mahathir tells doctors

PETALING JAYA, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today told general practitioners they must be prepared for a different set of medical challenges when Malaysia becomes a developed nation by the year 2020.

The Prime Minister said when Malaysia achieved the status of a developed nation, it would also face many of the medical problems now afflicting the developed countries.

"So we should take early action to prevent these problems from afflicting us.

"We should hold on to the family system and to our values of rejecting dadah abuse and avoiding the breakdown of the institution of marriage, alcoholism, smoking and so on.

"The family doctor plays a big role in this."

He said forecasts of the medical scenario of 2020 were mainly based on demography and population size.

With a higher life expectancy, plans had to be made now to strengthen geriatric services in the country.

Dr Mahathir said this when opening the 18th annual general meeting of the College of General Practitioners of Malaysia and a conference on family practice.

Also present were Health Minister Datuk Lee Kim Sai and the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

He said the Government had launched a campaign to promote clean and healthy living designed to keep the citizens away from habits that would affect their health.

Through this campaign and with the co-operation of all concerned, he said, health problems like heart disease, AIDS, food poisoning and diseases which could be prevented through immunisation would be reduced in the country.

He hoped the college as a body and doctors in general would support the Government's efforts towards this end.

He was glad to note that efforts to improve primary health care were being carried out and that one of this was the Master's in Family Practice course jointly run by the Health Ministry, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the college.

"This is a positive effort for a balanced health care in the urban and rural areas."

On health and medical

services for the future, he said they would continue to be planned in line with the nation's socio-economic policies.

"However, our planning has to be flexible to adapt to changing situations and problems.

"In order to have good planning and programmes, we must be innovative and be always on the lookout for new ways in health and medical services.

"With the advances in science and technology, we will get new types of equipment and drugs which are more effective.

"Here, we have to be constantly aware of escalating costs and we have to be discerning in choosing effective but economical treatments.

"It is hoped that doctors will not think that the most expensive medicines are the best ones."

Dr Mahathir said in the long run, upgrading and prevention should be balanced with treatment and rehabilitation.

He had the doctors in stitches when he told them that he still had 18 million "patients" who were "as demanding as yours".