

Government wants present medic

PM: Fee hike

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ALOR STAR, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it was improper for the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) to propose an increase in medical fees.

As far as the Government was concerned, it wanted the present charges to stay, he added.

The MMA must explain to the people why it needed to increase the charges, Dr Mahathir said when asked to comment on the proposed fee increase by the MMA.

The Government, he said, did not want to see any increase. "We want the prices of anything to remain at their old level, no matter what they are."

The Prime Minister earlier arrived at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport here to break fast at Masjid Titi Kerbau in Changloon, 40km from here.

He was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali. At the airport to welcome him were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff, Perlis Menteri Besar Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh and State Executive Councillors.

Dr Mahathir said he was told that the MMA had suggested a maximum increase of 185 per cent in consultation charges.

"I was told that the 185 per cent was the maximum increase and that they will not charge that high."

Dr Mahathir said that so far he had not seen the details of the proposed medical fees schedule.

"The MMA must explain why they want to increase the charges by so much. Normally charges made by private doctors are not de-

termined by the MMA. They come up with their own fees," he added.

The MMA submitted its revised schedule to Health Minister Datuk Lee Kim Sai about three weeks ago.

It had recommended RM15 for minor treatment, RM25 (intermediate), RM35 (major) and RM50 to RM100 (complex).

The MMA had been strongly criticised for its proposal which had been described as unethical, unjustified and not based on the inflation rate.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Mohamed Farid Ariffin had said any fee increase should be on par with the inflation rate, which had been maintained at about five per cent for the past few years.

He said the proposed 185 per cent increase in consultation charges was "too unrealistic".

The MMA had earlier defended the move, saying that the increase was not exorbitant as it covered consultation, medicine and overhead costs.

MMA president Dr Tibbs Fernandez, however, said yesterday the association's health insurance committee was still studying the guidelines.

He said the proposed fees schedule would be considered by the public-private sector consultative panel and would be implemented only after it obtained approval at the association's annual meeting in June.

Lee had said the medical fees schedule was not final and that the public should not be too concerned.

He said the schedule was merely a guideline giving a general idea of what the review was going to be like as the MMA committee drafting the schedule had yet to complete its job.

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