

Doctors told not to be lured by high pay

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By Saiful Azhar Abdullah

JITRA, Mon. — The Prime Minister today called on Government doctors to appreciate their professional duties and continue to serve in Government hospitals.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they should not be lured by the high salary offered by private practitioners.

“Government doctors must realise that they are serving the nation and the people. They should not only think of financial returns — they must appreciate

their contribution to the nation. I hope the doctors will stay with Government hospitals. The doctors must realise that the Government spent a lot for their training and because of this they should not cut short their service with Government hospitals.

“The Government is spending more than the fees they pay for the training,” Dr Mahathir said when opening the RM12 million Jitra hospital here.

Also present at the opening were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and Deputy Health Minister Datuk Farid Ariffin. About 2,099 people attended.

The construction of the 89-bed hospital started in 1999 on a 10ha land. It started giving outpatient treatment on Oct 1, last year, and admitting patients on Feb 14 this year. Dr Ahmad Ramli is the medical officer-in-charge of the hospital.

Dr Mahathir also said that capable contractors should be selected.

He said some projects were delayed because the contractors were not efficient.

“We do not want the Gov-

ernment to be blamed for delayed project and therefore capable contractors should be selected,” he added.

The Prime Minister and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali also visited the hospital wards.

At a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir, who was asked about the cases of negligence reported in Government and private hospitals, said he was not sure whether the same number of incidents occurred in the past.

“But now the society is more sophisticated and with the better information system, the people read more about negligence.”

However, Dr Mahathir said the Government had taken action to reduce negligence at hospitals. He said some negligent cases had been referred to court.

Dr Mahathir said that the trend of seeking damages and compensation could raise medical costs.

“The medical practitioners may have to pay high insurance costs to cover the legal suits and consequently, the practitioners may increase the medical charges.

“We do not want the situation to be like in the United States where doctors there conduct unnecessary check ups (and charge high bills) merely to avoid from being accused of being negligent.