

Be wary of some selfish members, MMA told

LANGKAWI, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed has advised the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) not to allow itself to be used by a few of its members to serve their personal interest.

Instead it must uphold the stature of the profession with dignity and build an unassailable image of integrity.

The Prime Minister said more than any other profession, the medical profession needed the respect and trust of those whom it served.

He noted that it was the MMA's duty to ensure this was achieved at all times.

Dr Mahathir was opening the 33rd annual general meeting of the MMA at Delima Resort here tonight. Also present was Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff.

The Prime Minister said practically every profession had an association and the medical profession was no exception.

"Indeed medical associations are among the first to be formed in any society," he said.

However Dr Mahathir reminded the MMA that a professional association was not quite like a trade union.

"It is not really meant to fix fees. Rather it is more concerned with ethics and

standard of professionalism among its members and because of this, it is usually accorded recognition by the society," he said.

In many instances, through its council, the MMA had determined whether a person was qualified to practise.

It also meted out disciplinary action for which it was given legal authority, Dr Mahathir said.

He reminded the MMA that these basic functions must always be borne in mind by the members, particularly the office-bearers.

He also reminded that an association lost its integrity and the respect of the community if it got involved in politics or in bickering and internal dissension.

On the other hand, if it helped to upgrade the quality of service and the skills of the practitioners, it would add prestige to the profession.

On the country's health standard, the Prime Minister said it had improved remarkably over the years.

He said rural health facilities had increased from 1,167 in 1970 to 1,778 in 1990.

Specialist services had also improved in all general hospitals and several other district hospitals.

He said the improvement in the health standard was the result of the nation's rapid growth and the Government's concerted efforts to upgrade the medical services.

Despite the growth, Dr Mahathir said the Government would sustain the de-

PLEASE TURN TO
PAGE 2, COL 8

Dr M: Control rising medical fees

SF - 7 JUN 1993

FROM PAGE ONE

velopment of the medical sector.

He said the Government would spend five per cent and seven per cent of its GNP in the year 2000 and 2020 respectively to upgrade medical facilities.

On rising medical costs, Dr Mahathir said it could not be avoided but efforts must be made to control them so that the increase was appropriate with the nation's rate of development.

"In this respect, doctors have an important role to play because their practising habits and decisions when attending to patients are an essential factor that will determine the costs," he said.

On quality medical service, he said doctors should be sensitive to the surroundings and inculcate a proactive attitude when providing the service.

The Prime Minister also called on private practitioners to implement a self-regulatory mechanism to monitor quality.

They could emulate the Health Ministry which had introduced its quality assurance programme.

Dr Mahathir also urged doctors to enrich their skills and knowledge.

He said of late, treatment and services rendered by private and Government hospitals had come under close scrutiny from the mass media.

"The irony is that the criticisms towards the profession and medical institutions are made at a time we are enjoying better medical care," he said.

He believed that the number of unfavourable incidents involving the medical profession could be reduced if the doctors had a better rapport with their patients.