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We are short of doctors for crisis teams, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a shortage of doctors has prevented the Government from establishing crisis teams to handle outbreaks like Japanese encephalitis.

"When we talk about crisis teams, are we talking about setting up a separate outfit for something that might not happen? Our problem is that we do not have enough doctors ... not many want to be trained as one because it takes a long time.

"The small number that we have complained about the low salary and some have left to join the private sector. If we want to increase their salary, others will also demand the same."

Dr Mahathir said it was only after an outbreak that everyone became aware of the solutions.

He was speaking to reporters after handing over keys to buyers of the Taman Bunga Raya low-cost housing project at Bukit Beruntung about 50km from here.

The Prime Minister was asked whether the country should set up a crisis team, following claims by some quarters that the authorities had been slow to respond in times of crisis.

On whether the authorities would resort to more drastic action to contain the JE virus, he said everyone now realised the importance of maintaining cleanliness and vaccination. The outbreak would not have occurred if these measures had been taken.

"If we do this and all agree to pay a little, we will not be facing this. But when we proposed things to upgrade cleanliness, some parties objected."

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