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# Mahathir: Privatisation of hospitals, varsities inevitable

By **Ferida Abdul Kudhus**

**PETALING JAYA, Mon:** There is no way the government can retain public hospital and university staff on the present salary scale if these institutions are not privatised, Prime Minister

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This is because the government cannot raise the salary scale for this group without triggering a demand for higher pay for almost one million government staff.

"It is then likely that ultra-modern new hospitals

and universities that are being built will be without doctors or teaching staff," he said in his keynote address at the opening of a national conference titled *National Vision Policy - the 8th Malaysia Plan and Privatisation*.

"This is the dilemma faced by the government."

Mahathir said there is a lot of objections to the privatisation of universities and hospitals as people would like to continue to enjoy the subsidised fees of these institutions.

He said while the government would like to provide free medical treatment to its staff and the poor, many

others can and should pay for their treatment.

Likewise, university fees should be paid by those who can afford to.

"The government does not want to shirk its duty to the people. Even developed countries with national health schemes insist on people paying contribu-

tions," he said.

"Malaysia is not a developed country, yet medicine is free."

The prime minister also touched on privatisation programmes which, he said, will continue despite facing some failures.