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Mahathir-Doctors

GOVT WILLING TO INCREASE INTAKE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

MELAKA, July 17 (Bernama) -- The government is willing to increase the intake of medical students to meet the demand for medical specialists in the country in future, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The prime minister said that if there were not enough doctors it was difficult for the government to deploy them to the rural areas in efforts to further improve the people's health standard.

"The problem now is that if we send them (government doctors) to the rural areas, they resign and join the private sector which offers more lucrative pay," he said when asked by reporters about the shortage of doctors in the country,

He was speaking after opening the Melaka-Manipal Medical College in Batu Hampar, Bukit Baru, here.

Asked about the government's move to get Malaysian medical specialists working overseas to return to serve in the country, he said it was difficult to recall them because some of them were earning 10 to 15 times more than what they would get here and some were even given share options by their companies.

"Of the 300 who applied (to return to serve here), 200 applications have been approved. This is considered better than not having any," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government could build many hospitals but it was difficult to get the necessary and qualified doctors to serve at the government hospitals.

He said that for the government, service to the people was more important than payment to ensure a healthy life for Malaysians.

The RM50 million Melaka-Manipal Medical College (MMMC) located on a 3.4ha site is a joint venture among the Melaka Education Foundation, MEMG International and the late Datuk K. Pathmanaban.

It took in its first batch of students in September 1997 and now has over 700 students in its two campuses in Melaka and Manipal, India.

It offers an MBBS twinning programme including pre-clinical training for two-and-a-half years at the Manipal International Science Centre, India.

The MMMC has, among others, a multipurpose hall, seminar and discussion rooms, library, clinical laboratories, lecture theatres and a hostel that can accommodate 400 students.

-- BERNAMA

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