

PM assures PSD scholarships will continue

Malaysiakini

11 June 2023

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has given assurance that the Public Service Department (PSD) will continue disbursing scholarships to students pursuing medicine, dentistry and pharmaceutical studies.

The decision to stop the sponsorship under PSD, he said, was a policy of the previous government.

“Last week, I had a special meeting with PSD, and they told me it’s an existing policy, an old policy.

I have asked for it to be reviewed based on the projected needs of the medical, pharmacy and dentistry sectors,” he said during a “Temu Anwar” session at Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang today.

This comes after Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa said her ministry is in talks with PSD over the department’s decision to cease its sponsorship” of medical scholars.

She said the ministry was also prepared to review a study conducted in 2019, which projected an oversupply of medical officers from 2026 to 2030.

Pointing out that there are changes after the Covid-19 pandemic, she said the study needs to be revisited.

“Our worry is that the move (to cease sponsorship) may discourage students from pursuing studies,” she said today.

It was reported that PSD had decided to stop sponsoring students pursuing studies in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy following the health ministry's study on the oversupply of medical officers.

In a written parliamentary reply on June 8, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Sabah, Sarawak Affairs and Special Duties) Armizan Mohd Ali said PSD's decision was made due to medical personnel oversupply from 2026 to 2030.

Armizan said the number of medical officers in 2021 stood at 72,812, exceeding the demand of 70,721.

“We have recorded a ratio of 1:420 of the total medical manpower requirements across the country to the population until December 2021, and it is expected that

the balance of 1:400 can be achieved in 2025.

“Demand for dental and pharmacy officers will be met in 2025 and 2029.

“However, students under the existing PSD programmes will be sponsored until 2027,” he said.

He said this in response to Wan Saiful Wan Jan’s (PN – Tasek Gelugor) query on the rationale behind the government’s decision.

He revealed that a study by the health ministry also found difficulties in absorbing all government-sponsored medical students into the public service.

“Through this measure, we believe PSD will be able to provide more effective sponsorship to more students in other fields.

“The cost of sponsoring a medical student is equivalent to the cost of sponsoring 10 students in other fields.”

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Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/668306>