

PM: JPA scholarships to continue

'The country still needs professionals in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy'

GEORGE TOWN: The Public Service Department (JPA) will continue to offer scholarships for students pursuing medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said the decision to continue offering the scholarships was made as the country still needed professionals in these areas.

"Since last week, I met with JPA and they said that (stopping sponsorship) is an existing policy, a previous policy.

"So I asked for this to be reviewed because the need for professionals in the medical, dental and pharmacy sectors is still there.

"This means that the scholarship programme will be continued," he said, answering a question from a student during the Temu Anwar programme at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) here yesterday.

Anwar arrived at the university around 4.30pm and spent about an hour interacting with the students in matters involving education and student welfare.

JPA had earlier announced to stop sponsoring students in med-



Hope for the future: Anwar sharing a light moment with students at Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra USM during the Temu Anwar event. – LIM BENG TATT/The Star

icine, dentistry and pharmacy.

It was reported that JPA made the decision following a study - conducted in 2019 - which projected an oversupply of medical officers from 2026 to 2030.

According to Minister in the

Prime Minister's Department (Sabah, Sarawak Affairs and Special Functions) Datuk Armizan Mohd Ali, the Health Indicators 2022 report showed a nationwide 1:420 ratio of doctor to population (across both public

and private sectors), with a 1:400 ratio expected to be achieved in 2025.

Yesterday, Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa said the study would be reviewed as there had been changes in the needs of the

country, especially in the post-Covid-19 era.

On another matter, the Prime Minister said the government could not stop doctors at public hospitals from leaving and joining the private sector as it would not be fair to them.

Anwar said they would be replaced by training medical students to cope with the demand of doctors in the public service.

He said if doctors in public hospital were to get offers and a better career path, there was nothing much that the government could do.

"Let's say if you are from the computer science field and work in the public sector, and you got an offer from Amazon, I will not block your path because it will be a good exposure for you," he said when answering questions from students at Universiti Sains Malaysia on the way forward for contracts doctors and the future of health workforce in the country.

Anwar said leeway should also be given to scholars who received job offers in a foreign country that they study in as it could give them a good career exposure.