

## GOVERNMENT DOCTORS – MODERN DAY ‘SLAVES’

**(BERITA MAY ISSUE)**

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**Two HKL doctors caught idling  
By: (Sun, 26 Apr 2009)**

*KUALA LUMPUR (April 26, 2009) : Deputy Minister of Federal Territories Datuk M. Saravanan today "caught" two doctors at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital (HKL) emergency department reading newspapers and doing their own things instead of attending to more than 20 patients waiting in pain for treatment.*

*Saravanan made the shocking discovery at about 10.30am when he went to the hospital to visit a university student who was injured after she was knocked down by a car driven by his (Saravanan's) driver.....*

This ‘juicy’ piece of news threw doctors once again into a world of controversy and surrounded by media frenzy. Doctors in the public sector have always being the target of ‘attack’ by the public and the media from time immemorial. It is certainly not easy being a government doctor in this country – overworked and unappreciated. Currently, the operating hours of 16 government clinics has been extended to 8 am to 9.30 pm on working days and 8 am to 12 noon on Saturdays. According to the Minister of Health, there is a proposal under study to increase the number of government clinics with extended operating hours – 8 am to 9.30 pm on normal working days and 8 am to 12 noon on Saturdays.

On 25 February 2009, the Ministry of Health launched the Corporate Culture Campaign with the motto “We Are Here For You”. It was an initiative to ensure that healthcare services are delivered to the people as a team in a cheerful, sincere, caring and professional way. The three core values involved – caring, professionalism and teamwork. The Minister informed that the public’s feedback in an international survey found that overall patient satisfaction was good at about 90%, with the caring criteria scoring 40%, professionalism (60%) and teamwork (70%).

All these are done to improve public health services and to offer quality health care and medical services to the people. Doctors in the government sector are doing their jobs to the best of their ability and patients always come first to them. There is never compromise in patient care. The Ministry of Health has ordered government hospitals to send a weekly report to the Health Ministry on patient care services. *“.....the ministry was especially concerned with the time taken for patients to see doctors as well as the number of doctors available to see patients..... The waiting time for outpatients at hospitals should be cut from the current average of 45 minutes to 30 minutes....”* (Source : NST, 30-3-09).

The public failed to realize the workload of the government doctors is very heavy. They do not get the credit they deserve. *“The government manages 75% of Malaysia’s healthcare needs. The Ministry provides free health care services to the civil servants, pensioners, their dependents and the poor. Of the 22,500 medical practitioners in 2007, 13,500 were in the public sector and the rest in the private sector”. The Health Ministry’s operating expenditure has increased from almost RM3 billion in 1996 to close to RM12 billion in 2008. However, Malaysia’s healthcare spending [approximately 2% of GDP] is considered modest when compared with that of Singapore [3.7%] and Thailand [3% to 3.5%].*

(Source : The Star, 14 March 2009)

There is a huge disparity between public and private healthcare services in Malaysia. The public healthcare sector is always experiencing brain drain, losing its trained and experienced doctors to the more lucrative private sector. It also caters to the bulk of the Malaysian population who cannot afford private healthcare. These had contributed to the overwhelming workload for the government healthcare system. *“At present, the public sector accounts for about 39,000 or 77% of the total hospital beds in the country, while the private sector accounts for the remainder of about 12,000 beds..... But there are almost 9,000 doctors in the private sector, compared with about 13,500 doctors employed by the government. So the ratio of doctors to hospital beds is still lower for the private sector, which has one doctor to attend to every 1.3 beds, versus the public sector’s one doctor for every three beds.”* (Source : The Star, 14 March 2009)

The public healthcare sector can change its poor image by upgrading the existing facilities, acquiring new technologies and equipment and improvement its manpower resources as well as other staff benefits.

*“.....the overall performance of Malaysian’s healthcare system is considered remarkably good by the standards of the World Health Organization (WHO).*

*Indicators supporting this are the country’s health adjusted life expectancy, which is around 63 years (comparable to that of industrialized countries), and the maternal mortality rates, which have fallen by more than ten-fold over the last four decades (from 320 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1957 to less than 30 deaths per 100,000 live births currently).*

(Source : The Star, 14 March 2009)