

UMS main campus is not affected

KUALA LUMPUR: The development of Universiti Malaysia Sabah's main campus will proceed despite a cut in the university's allocation from RM350 million to RM260 million, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Khalid Yunus said.

He told the Dewan Rakyat that the cut was part of the reduction in the development expenditure of all public universities in the country totalling RM440 million.

Winding-up debate on the Supplementary Supplies Bill for his Ministry, Khalid said the government also had cut the allocation for the Smart School programme from RM116 million to RM50 million.

However, the programme involving 90 schools would proceed early next year as scheduled as its main compo-

nents were not affected, he said.

On the proposal by Yunus Rahmat (BN-Jelebu) that the National Higher Education Fund also provide loans to those taking diploma courses, Khalid said that at present it could only lend to those taking degree courses in both public and private universities.

Khalid also said that 254 Malaysian students studying abroad had applied to continue their studies locally, while another 368 had made enquiries at the Ministry.

However, the Ministry was facing a problem in placing such students who were pursuing courses in professional fields like medicine and dentistry as the transfer of credits was difficult to carry out.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, replying to ques-

tions concerning the Ministry, said 183 specialists and 236 other medical officers had been recruited on contract to work in government hospitals.

She said RM18 million was spent for this purpose including on contract nurses.

The government had in principle agreed that the services of those who were needed be extended, especially in the rural areas of Sabah and Sarawak, she said.

Zaharah also said that more than 24,000 HIV cases had been detected throughout the country so far.

However, for the first time, there was a decline in the number of cases last year and again during the first two months of this year, she said without stating figures.

Deputy Human Resources Minister Datuk Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the government preferred to send back foreign

workers in the construction sector whose works permits had expired.

This, he said, was because most of them were not interested in working in the plantation sector which offered a lower salary.

Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam said the additional allocation given in the form of subsidy to KTM Berhad was to cover the losses suffered by the rail company for its social services and on non-economical routes such as the Gua Musang-Singapore, Tumpat-Gemas, Gua Musang-Tumpat routes.

The Supplementary Supply (1997) 1998 Bill and the Third Supplementary Development Expenditure Estimates 1997 were later passed by the Dewan Rakyat.

The House sits again tomorrow. - Bernama