

12MP should also focus on developing, nurturing healthcare workers, says MMA

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The government should also place emphasis on nurturing healthcare workers instead of just infrastructures in the 12th Malaysian Plan (12MP), says health experts. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The government should also place emphasis on nurturing healthcare workers instead of just infrastructures in the 12th Malaysian Plan (12MP), says health experts.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said while the MMA applauds the initiatives to enhance healthcare under the 12MP, they remain concerned that greater focus is given to infrastructure instead of developing and nurturing our human capital.

She said as part of efforts to improve the quality of care, enhancing healthcare human resources should be a priority.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the government is committed to improving the people's quality of health under the 12MP through the Health White Paper.

He said this includes upgrading a total of 1,200 health clinics across the country, speed up the first phase of the Hospital Sultanah Aminah upgrading project, scrutinise the proposal to rent high-tech equipment, including the implementation of electronic medical records at government hospitals and health clinics.

This would also include the establishment of the Mental Health Institute and National Aging Action Plan.

On the upgrading of clinics and the Sultanah Aminah Hospital, Dr Azizan said there should be clear implementation plans, transparency on timelines and consistent monitoring.

"While upgrading of healthcare facilities and focusing on mental health are crucial, effective and timely execution will be key to its successful implementation.

"We also hope that apart from Hospital Sultanah Aminah, other hospitals in need of upgrades will also be looked into," she said.

Associate Professor Dr Rosliza Abdul Manaf said while she welcomed the upgrading of facilities particularly in rural areas, it was also equally important to have more posts for paramedics and doctors.

The Universiti Putra Malaysia public health medicine specialist said apart from increasing the number of manpower, it was also vital to enhance the human resource capacity and skills to meet current healthcare service demands.

"The government should encourage or give incentives to healthcare staff for continuous lifelong learning, using various platforms such as massive open online courses and webinars," she said.

Meanwhile, she described the implementation of nationwide and well-linked electronic medical records (EMR) as "much-awaited".

Dr Rosliza said the initiative would be better if a holistic network of EMR connecting public and private health facilities could be established to encourage public-private partnerships.

"I also agree with the attention to strengthen mental healthcare.

"A strategic move for this is by enhancing the functions of existing available centres in public and private as well as in the universities.

"The same goes to elderly healthcare," she added.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia community health physician, health economics specialist Professor Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh said the government is moving in the right direction as there is a need for Malaysia to strengthen our primary care.

She said primary care which includes the day-to-day healthcare given by a health care provider is essential to reduce congestions in hospitals.

"Malaysia's primary care system needs to be better equipped should we face the next pandemic because they are the fort that would hold the healthcare system in its place.

"They need to be better equipped and there needs to be better facilities and resources.

"Healthcare management too must be improved so that there is better management of human resources and reducing brain drain so that Malaysia would be able to retain its talents." she said.