

# Speed up healthcare reforms which are long overdue, MMA urges govt

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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) wants the government to take speculation of healthcare workers going on strike seriously, and speed up reforms to address their long-standing grievances.

MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said the association does not condone strike actions but the frustration and burnout among public healthcare workers has pushed them to the limit.

"There are still not enough permanent positions to give contract doctors secure employment.

"Our public healthcare facilities are still overcrowded, there are manpower shortages, and most healthcare workers are overworked and underpaid," he said in a statement on Tuesday (Feb 14).

He noted that these issues had been brought up in meetings MMA held with the Health Ministry previously.

"The Health Minister is committed to reforms in our healthcare system, but support from the Finance Ministry and Public Service Department (PSD) will be vital to ensuring that they can be carried out.

"Many of the issues, especially involving human resources, will require budgeting and planning by the Finance Ministry and PSD.

"MPs from both sides of the divide should support efforts to reform the healthcare system," he added.

Dr Muruga attributed many of the issues in healthcare as a result of failed policies such as the commercialisation of medical education, which led to the mushrooming of medical schools, and the contract doctor system introduced in 2016.

"We hope the Prime Minister, as a reformist himself, will right the wrongs of the past.

"We wish to remind the Prime Minister that Malaysians have not forgotten the promises made (on improving healthcare) during the GE15 campaign by his coalition and MPs who are now in government," he said.

Dr Muruga hoped the tabling of Budget 2023 on Feb 24 would reflect the government's commitment to healthcare reforms.

"MMA asked for an increase in the health budget to 5% of the nation's GDP. This should be the minimum spend allocated for health," he added.