

MMA: Malaysia at risk of losing specialist doctors

By [New Straits Times](#)

June 18, 2026 @ 7:10pm



Malaysian Medical Association president Datuk Dr R. Thirunavukarasu says Malaysia is at risk of losing more specialists. NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: Doctors should not be penalised for undertaking government-recognised training while continuing to serve in the public healthcare system, said the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

Its president, Datuk Dr R. Thirunavukarasu, said the government, which sponsors and recognises such training, should also acknowledge the service provided during that period.

"MMA is particularly concerned about the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (LNPT) requirement for the 2026/2027 intake, which shifted from the best three appraisals out of five years to three consecutive years. Such changes should be clearly communicated and implemented with adequate notice.

"One of the key issues involves specialists undergoing recognised Masters training. These doctors continue serving patients while training, yet their training years are often recorded as *cuti belajar*, resulting in gaps in LNPT records. This makes little sense," he said in a statement.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said 70 per cent of Malaysians depend on the public healthcare system for their care.

"When we lose a subspecialist, it is the public patient who pays the price through longer waiting times, delayed treatment and reduced access to specialised care.

"Malaysia is facing a critical shortage of specialists. The government itself has acknowledged a shortfall of nearly 11,000 specialists. At a time when the country is working to close this gap, we should be removing barriers to specialist training, not creating new ones."

Dr Thirunavukarasu said Malaysia needs more subspecialists in areas such as cardiology, oncology, gastroenterology and neonatology, yet specialists seeking subspecialty training are facing increasing uncertainty over eligibility requirements.

The subspecialty programme is overseen by the Health Ministry, but eligibility rules and LNPT requirements fall under the Public Service Department.

"This means the ministry responsible for developing the healthcare workforce does not fully control the rules governing progression into subspecialty training."

Under the current system, a doctor may require more than 15 years to progress from house officer to subspecialist.

"Every additional delay shortens the number of productive years they can serve the nation as a subspecialist. Every delayed subspecialist means one fewer future cardiologist, oncologist, gastroenterologist or neonatologist available to serve patients," said Dr Thirunavukarasu.

He also expressed concern that applicants are often informed only that they were unsuccessful without any explanation.

"Decisions that affect careers and ultimately the country's future specialist workforce should be transparent. Written reasons and a proper appeal mechanism should be made available," he said.

To address these issues, MMA called for clear written clarification of LNPT requirements and eligibility criteria; recognition of service performed during recognised training years; standardised eligibility requirements across recognised pathways; written reasons and a proper appeal mechanism for unsuccessful applicants; and, greater emphasis on competency-based selection.

"The solution is straightforward and does not require another task force. The ministry, PSD and the Higher Education Ministry must work together to ensure that workforce policies support, rather than hinder, the development of future subspecialists.

"Malaysia needs more subspecialists, not fewer. A specialist blocked at home is a specialist recruited abroad. And the patient left behind is in a public hospital."