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# MMA: Healthcare in need of reforms, improvements

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By Ida Nadirah Ibrahim



MMA president Dr Ravindran R. Naidu says accessibility to healthcare is a basic right of an individual that should not be traded as a commodity. — Picture by Choo Choy May

KUALA LUMPUR, May 22 — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said the country's healthcare system is in need of reforms and improvements in order to deliver a seamless and sustainable healthcare to the people.

Its president Dr Ravindran R. Naidu said in a statement that while the group welcomes the new government's effort to operate the Health Ministry based on research, evidence and facts, he said accessibility to healthcare is a basic right of an individual that should not be traded as a commodity.

He said among the focus of reforms in the healthcare system that needs to be addressed includes the health care budget and human capital, transparency, accountability and good governance in implementation, excess in medical graduates, and reforms in the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC).

"It is reassuring to note that the Health Minister designate (Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad) will work towards increasing the healthcare budget as recommended by WHO," he said in reference to the World Health Organisation.

"Further importance being given to enhance human capital, reduce wastage and leakage in the system, funds allocated for research and development and not neglecting preventive care and early detection of non-communicable diseases and its complications."

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Dr Ravindran said more funds should be allocated in human capital development at all levels from doctors to nurses, who have provided excellent services.

He said the promotion process should be reviewed transparently without any favouritism and based on performance, seniority, and merit.

“Differing non-transparent bureaucratic processes should be withdrawn in the promotion process of healthcare professionals in the public sector with a view to reduce brain drain,” he said.

In addressing the manipulation of patronage and leakage, Dr Ravindran proposed an open tender system without intermediary brokers.

He said all previous concessionaire agreements providing services to the ministry or even the private sector via the ministry should be made available for public scrutiny.

“There should be no political pressure on the bureaucrats in carrying out their duties as public servants.

“The minister designate should engage various stakeholders at all levels so as to get first-hand opinions on issues at ground level rather than just depending on one or two bureaucrats and paid consultants,” he said.

In support of the Selangor government’s medical scheme “Skim Peduli Sihat”, Dr Ravindran said the group welcomes the government’s initiative to make it a national program as enhancing primary care should also be focused on over 6,500 private general practitioners clinics and not the public sector only.

He said over commercialisation of healthcare should also be addressed as it increases healthcare cost and does not serve a purpose to patients.

“Private hospitals should remain focussed in the secondary and tertiary care rather than over commercialising health screening and encroaching on primary care. Diagnostic centres and laboratories that over commercialise health screening should be regulated and monitored,” he said.

Dr Ravindran said the number of admissions into medical schools in the country must be monitored and reduced, as the quantity and quality of medical graduates are startling.

“There is an urgent need to address the cause for delay in postings and employment of House-Officers and the fate of these doctors on contract after 4 years,” he said.

As for the MMC, Dr Ravindran said the council requires reformation in order to play a more proactive role as a corporate body in regulating registered doctors in Malaysia and continue to guide doctors and safeguard the patients.

He said issues that needs to be addressed urgently are of the delay in the issuance of Annual Practicing Certificate for doctors as well as the election of council members.

As the council should be independent from the ministry, he said the Medical Act 1971 needs to be amended to address the said issues.

“MMA hopes the minister designate form a group that consists of various stakeholders to get an unmediated view of issues faced to prepare a master plan and get ready for a better outcome.

“Health and healthcare involves everyone and for a sustainable solution it requires the involvement of all stakeholders and not just policy makers.

“Moving forward, MMA will continue to monitor and help reform the healthcare system to achieve the goals of the government,” he said.

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