

## MMA urges Budget 2027 action as 3,494 doctors leave MOH

25 September 2026



by **HIDAYATH HISHAM**

**THE** Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has urged the government to use Budget 2027 to address the continued loss of doctors and specialists from the public healthcare system, warning that staffing shortages are already putting pressure on service delivery.

MMA president Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan said 3,494 doctors left the Health Ministry (MOH) between 2019 and 2023, including 2,385 permanent medical officers and 1,109 specialists, while

specialist resignations rose 57% over the period.

“Malaysia cannot afford to wait while its public healthcare workforce continues to shrink,” he said in a statement today.

MMA said Malaysia is already short of nearly 11,000 specialists, while nursing vacancies stand at about 18%.

It also cited Public Service Department data presented to the Parliamentary Special Select Committee on Health showing MOH vacancies rising from 10,419 in 2017 to 54,362 in 2024, while the filling rate fell from 96% to 83%.

Against this backdrop, the association called for sufficient funding to support the government's plan to abolish the contract system and offer eligible house officers permanent positions after completing housemanship, targeted for implementation by 2028.

MMA also wants previous years of contract service to count towards seniority and salary progression, arguing that doctors should not lose years of career advancement because they entered the system under the contract scheme.

For specialists, the association proposed a clearer promotion pathway to Special Grade or Premier Grade C after at least five years of satisfactory service following gazettement.

It said promotions should be based on 80% objective and measurable criteria and 20% structured professional assessment, with every specialist recognised as a medical consultant undergoing a formal promotion assessment by the 10th year after gazettement.

MMA also called for specialist allowances to begin from the date of gazettement, fairer on-call rates, sufficient training posts and the retention of previous Regional Incentive Payment (BIW) rates

for healthcare personnel serving in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan.

The association also wants working arrangements aligned with the 45-hour weekly standard under the Public Service Remuneration System, including protected rest after a continuous 24-hour shift.

Beyond workforce issues, MMA called for a higher allocation for the Flying Doctor Service (FDS) following the recent helicopter tragedy that killed five people.

It said additional funding is needed for maintenance, aircraft support, equipment and operational requirements, while personnel allowances should also be reviewed.

MMA noted that the FDS allowance has remained unchanged since 1978 and said a revision was long overdue.

The association also wants Budget 2027 to put more funding into primary care and prevention, particularly for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

It said screening programmes should be followed by treatment and monitoring, with Malaysia's network of more than 11,000 private general practitioner clinics used to support follow-up care, immunisation programmes and medical examinations.

MMA further proposed establishing a Private Healthcare Development Division within MOH to coordinate the private

sector, which accounts for about 49% of Malaysia's total health expenditure.

The association also proposed RM10 million to digitise registration and licensing processes under the Private Medical Practice Control Section, alongside wider integration of private healthcare providers into the national digital health infrastructure.

MMA said some workforce reforms could be phased in, beginning with long-serving personnel, critical specialties and areas facing the most severe shortages.

It also called for a real-time national healthcare workforce dashboard to track vacancies, workforce distribution, training capacity and attrition.

"Budget 2027 should not be measured only by the size of the health allocation. It should also be judged by whether it keeps doctors and other healthcare professionals in the system, protects the capacity to train the next generation and strengthens the ability of public healthcare to serve Malaysians," Sivanaesan said.