

## MMA calls for stronger parliamentary focus on rising healthcare costs

By Bernama

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**KUALA LUMPUR (Jan 26):** Issues surrounding healthcare financing and rising medical costs must continue to be raised and debated in Parliament as they affect the wider public, said Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Datuk Dr R Thirunavukarasu.

He said the Malaysian Health Insurance and Takaful (MHIT) initiative reflects the government's first serious, coordinated effort involving multiple ministries and the regulator to address medical inflation and rising insurance premiums.

"This is the first time we are seeing a serious, collective effort by multiple ministries and the regulator to address healthcare financing issues.

It is the right direction, especially after concerns were raised in Parliament about medical inflation and rising premiums," he said on Bernama TV's The Nation programme on Monday.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said healthcare costs have increased due to factors such as an ageing population, the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), higher regulatory costs and the wider use of advanced medical technology, particularly in secondary and tertiary care.

He said delayed treatments during the Covid-19 pandemic also contributed to a surge in cases post-pandemic, placing additional pressure on the healthcare system, especially in private

hospitals, while primary care costs remain manageable.

According to Dr Thirunavukarasu, about 70% of the population depends on the public healthcare system, which remains overstretched and must continue to be strengthened as the country's safety net.

"Healthcare is a systemic issue. You cannot have a short-term solution," he said, adding that reforms outlined in the Health White Paper including healthcare financing reform and manpower retention need to be pursued consistently.

He also reiterated MMA's position that public healthcare spending should reach at least 5% of the gross domestic product (GDP), which he estimated at about RM70 billion to RM80 billion annually.

He said Members of Parliament should play a stronger role in discussing sustainable funding mechanisms, including social health insurance and national health financing, to ensure long-term system sustainability.

"Healthcare should not be politicised. It should be a whole-of-nation, whole-of-society responsibility," he said.

*Uploaded by Felyx Teoh*