

PSD halting scholarships for medical students unacceptable, says MMA

By **Dania Nabila** - March 26, 2023 @ 2:17pm



MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said PSD should explain the "sudden move", which will have an adverse impact on the country's efforts to meet the increasing demand for healthcare professionals. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Public Service Department's decision to halt scholarships for students wishing to pursue medical studies in local universities is irresponsible.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said PSD should explain the "sudden move", which will have an adverse impact on the country's efforts to meet the increasing demand for healthcare professionals.

"Will this move affect the expertise needed in the public healthcare sector in the near future and the long term? What is the government's policy on human resources planning for the public healthcare sector?" he asked in a statement today.

He said Malaysia has yet to reach the ideal doctor-to-patient ratio of 1:400 in public healthcare institutions.

"In certain hospitals, there may be a doctor-to-patient ratio of 1:1,000, and there is a shortage of specialists."

Dr Muruga said MMA was most concerned with the possibility of not having enough specialists in the future, given the rise in demand for specialised services driven by an ageing population.

"Malaysia will become an ageing nation by 2030, where 15 per cent of its population will be 60 years old and older. How are we preparing for this demographic change?"

He urged PSD to formulate projections for the number of medical officers, specialists and allied healthcare personnel that Malaysia's public healthcare sector needed in the next five to 10 years.

He said there should also be statistics on the number of healthcare workers who need training.

He added that sufficient planning for healthcare human resources was needed, and population growth and demand must be taken into account.



Malaysia has yet to reach the ideal doctor-to-patient ratio of 1:400 in public healthcare institutions. - NSTP/EFFENDY RASHID (for illustration purposes only)

On March 20, PSD issued an announcement on the variable loans offered to individuals who intend to enrol in first-degree programmes at local public universities, premier polytechnics and government-linked universities.

The loan agreement is enforced according to four variable loan conditions: A loan can be converted to a full scholarship and exempted from refund if the student enters the civil service upon graduation; repayment of 25 per cent of the loan amount if the student works with a government-linked company upon graduation; graduates need

to repay 50 per cent of the loan if they work for a local private company; and, graduates are required to fully repay the loan amount if they do not follow the previous conditions.

Applications are open online at esilav2.jpa.gov.my from March 20 to April 2.

Inquiries on sponsorship programmes and technical problems can be made by calling 03-8885 3297 from March 20 to 31 at 9am to 4pm or email pidn2023@jpa.gov.my.