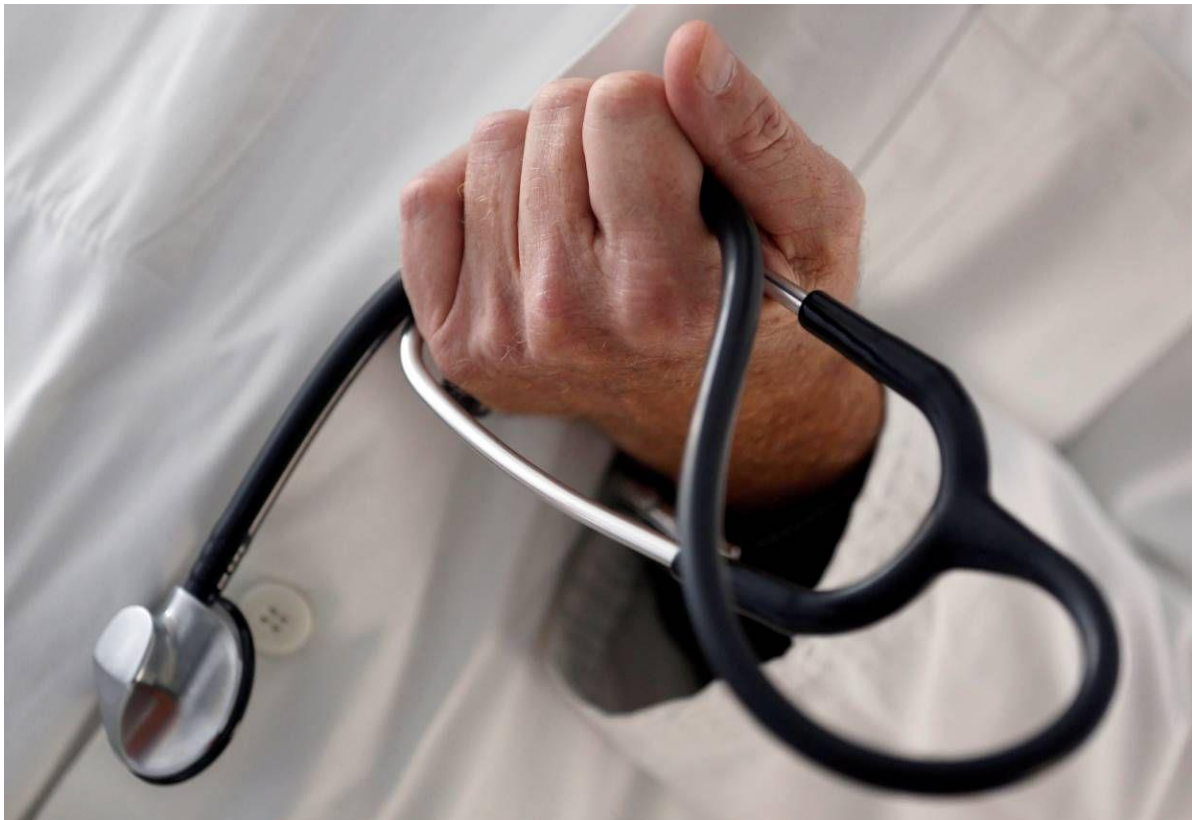


MMA: Govt should take planned strike as a wake-up call to urgently address the issues faced by contract doctors

Wednesday, 29 Mar 2023

6:33 PM MYT



The planned strike by a contract doctor group as reported in the media should not come as a surprise to the government as the frustration felt by these doctors have gone way past their limits.

The MMA does not condone a strike as a means to get the government to address their issues.

However it is understandable why this route is being taken. Past and present governments have not been able to address the contract doctors issues and they feel they are getting nowhere. It is hard for them to go about their duties with this feeling of uncertainty.

The MMA has also fought hard for their issues to be resolved and we too agree that progress has been unsatisfactory. Past and present governments have not been able to adequately

help the contract doctors especially on the issue of permanent positions that has dragged on for years.

There aren't enough permanent positions and contract doctors are overworked and underpaid.

Yet these doctors are expected to carry out their duties as a 'service for the nation.' It is totally unfair and many feel they are being taken advantage of.

The 1,500 positions announced in Budget 2023 is not much different from the 1,500 permanent positions promised for each year during the previous Health Minister's term and recently, the JPA rejected a proposal to increase the contract MOs on-call allowance. There has hardly been any encouraging news for the contract doctors.

Going forward, we urge this group of contract doctors not to proceed with the strike as it can affect patient care at public health care facilities and cause colleagues to take on additional responsibilities at our already overcrowded public healthcare facilities. At the same time, we urge the government to speed up their delivery on promises to help the contract doctors. The contract doctors have waited too long. Let's work towards solutions now before there is more brain drain.

Lastly, someone also has to take responsibility if indeed there is a strike. Although the contract doctor issues are inherited and are a result of failed policies of the past, the health ministry and the government of the day must take full responsibility for outcomes in the event of a strike.

Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai

Malaysian Medical Association president