

# Medical associations welcome PM's commitment on resolving contract doctor issues

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*MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said they understand that securing permanent positions will require a significant, long-term financial commitment from the government but for now, the executive can go ahead with more easily attainable measures. – AFP pic*

KUALA LUMPUR (March 31): Medical associations have welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's commitment to resolve in three years the long-standing issues affecting contract doctors.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said they understand that securing permanent positions will require a significant, long-term financial commitment from the government but for now, the executive can go ahead with more easily attainable measures.

“Apart from the lack of permanent posts, there are many other issues that are causing frustration among the public health care workforce which the government should focus on resolving now as some of the issues do not even require financial commitment to resolve,” he said in a statement today.

He said this includes ensuring more reasonable working hours for a work-life balance, transparency in the selection criteria for permanent posts, having a proper career pathway and improving the work environment by eliminating bullying.

Dr Muruga said MMA was concerned that more resignations could happen in the meantime as some contract doctors might not be willing to wait another three years.

On Wednesday, Anwar assured contract doctors that 1,500 of them would be made permanent this year and the government would need three years to resolve the problems they faced.

Meanwhile, Public Health Organisation Malaysia advisor Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar, when contacted by Bernama, said the government assurance to resolve the contract doctor issues had given hope to the doctors involved and their families.

“For now, we have not yet been informed on the strategy and approach proposed by the government because matters concerning posts are complex and have dragged on for some time,” he said, adding that the Health Ministry should give a clear picture of its plans to convince doctors and medical students.

Saying the government promise to absorb contract doctors into permanent service this year is a short-term solution, he suggested that the government look into the rate of appointment in relation to the number of existing contract doctors.

Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) president Datuk Adnan Mat hoped that the Health Ministry and Public Service Department (JPA) would get Cuepacs involved in discussions to resolve the contract doctor issues.

He also said Cuepacs was against amending the Pension Act 1980 to enable civil servants to be appointed to permanent posts but placed on the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) scheme.

“Cuepacs is worried that such amendments to the act will affect all civil servants in the future when they are no longer allowed to choose between the permanent pensionable scheme or EPF contributions,” he said in a statement.

At the same time, Cuepacs urged all civil servants including those in the health sector to remain focused on discharging their duties and responsibilities and to avoid taking any action that could affect their work.

Adnan said going on strike would not resolve any issues and instead would create more problems especially for the people, who want the best service. – Bernama