

# Set milestones in 3-year timeline to solve contract doctor woes, govt told

The Malaysian Medical Association warns more contract doctors will resign as they may not be willing to wait that long.

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The government is committed to giving contract doctors permanent posts but needs three years to resolve the issue, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said.

PETALING JAYA: The government must set milestones over the three-year period it needs to resolve the permanent placement of contract doctors, says the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

Its president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said this in response to Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's statement yesterday that the government needed three years to address the issue.



*Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai.*

“The government should set a timeline with milestones to achieve for the (benefit of the) affected doctors. However, it will take some convincing for contract doctors to believe that a breakthrough is possible for them to obtain permanent posts,” Muruga Raj said in a statement today.

He added that he expected more contract doctors to resign from the health ministry, as some of them may not be willing to wait another three years.

Yesterday, Anwar said the problem of permanent placement had existed for a long time and that the current government could not resolve it within a year. He said that for a start, 1,500 contract doctors will be made permanent this year.

However, Muruga Raj said Anwar’s announcement was not new as the same number had been given in a promise by former health minister Khairy Jamaluddin to make contract doctors permanent.

“It needs to be at least double that number, because around 3,000 medical graduates will join the system every year.”

In August last year, Khairy said 1,500 permanent positions will be offered to contract officers yearly.

Meanwhile, MMA also called for the government to focus on resolving other issues that don’t require any financial commitment.

“Some of the issues do not cost anything to resolve, such as ensuring reasonable working hours for a work-life balance, transparency in the selection criteria for permanent posts, and ensuring a proper career pathway,” he said.

Muruga Raj said the government should also improve the work environment for all medical staff under the health ministry by eliminating bullying in the workplace.

To that end, he said the MMA had proposed for the department heads at public health facilities to be made responsible for any bullying issues that arise at the workplace.