

Budget 2026: MMA proposes raising public healthcare spending to 5% of GDP

NATION

Sunday, 05 Oct 2025



KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called on the government to raise public healthcare spending from 2.4 per cent to five per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Budget 2026, as a long-term investment in the nation's health system.

Its president, Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo, said that to fund healthcare financing, MMA proposed removing the sugar subsidy and expanding the sugar tax on sugary drinks, with the revenues ringfenced for the Health Ministry's use.

"This not only discourages unhealthy consumption, but also channels resources directly into strengthening healthcare," he said in a statement on Sunday (Oct 5).

Dr Thirunavukarasu said the most urgent priority for Budget 2026 was addressing the severe shortages and retention issues in the public healthcare workforce, as effective policies could not be delivered without a strong workforce.

Advertisement

He said the association welcomed the government's commitment to abolishing the contract doctor system and urged that all remaining contract doctors be absorbed into permanent positions, while providing greater support for postgraduate training through both the master's and parallel pathways.

He said that MMA also urged the government to review the doctors' on-call allowances, which remained outdated at RM9.16 per hour, and proposed the establishment of a national dashboard to map healthcare workers and services nationwide, ensuring transparency and an equitable distribution of resources.

Apart from that, Dr Thirunavukarasu said MMA called for stronger prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) via screenings at private clinics, outsourcing national health checks, and increasing mental health support.

He said to reduce health risks, MMA recommended more transparent food labelling, tax relief for healthy lifestyles, and boosting the Madani Medical Scheme to RM150mil.

He said MMA also suggested that digitalisation should be made a cornerstone of healthcare reform, including the standardisation of patient ID stickers nationwide to reduce errors, while the MySejahtera app should be enhanced to also serve as a platform to map participating private general practitioners' clinics.

Besides the workforce, NCD and digitalisation concerns, Dr Thirunavukarasu said Budget 2026, to be tabled Oct 10, must start preparing for elderly care, in which its cost was projected to reach RM21bil or 1.08% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2040.

"We urge greater investment in home care services to keep seniors healthy within their communities, reducing unnecessary hospital admissions. We need more geriatricians, palliative care specialists, and allied health professionals, while hospitals and clinics should be upgraded with age-friendly facilities," he said.

MMA also proposed incentivising private hospitals to lend diagnostic equipment after hours and formalising the integration of GP health clinics with hospitals, citing the success of past pandemic collaborations. – Bernama