

MMA President Calls For Healthcare Spending Raised To 5% Of GDP

By *Editor*

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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 to that fund the healthcare financing, MMA proposed removing the sugar subsidy and expanding the sugar tax on sugary drinks, with revenues ringfenced for the Health Ministry's (MOH) use.

"This not only discourages unhealthy consumption, but also channels resources directly into strengthening healthcare," he said in a statement today.

Dr Thirunavukarasu added that 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.

The MMA welcomes the government's commitment to abolishing the contract

doctor system and urges that all remaining contract doctors be absorbed into permanent positions. Greater support should be given to postgraduate training through both the master's and parallel pathways.

It also urged the government to review the doctors' on-call allowances, which remained outdated at RM9.16 per hour, and proposed the establishment of a national dashboard to map healthcare workers and services nationwide, ensuring transparency and an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, he said MMA called for stronger prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through screenings at private clinics, outsourcing national health checks, and increasing mental health support.

To reduce health risks, MMA recommended more transparent food labelling, tax relief for healthy lifestyles, and boosting the Madani Medical Scheme to RM150 million.

The association 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 this Friday (October 10), must start preparing for elderly care, in which its cost is projected to reach RM21 billion or 1.08 per cent of the 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 GP-health clinic-hospital cluster integration, citing the success of past pandemic collaborations.