

MMA urges increased healthcare spending in Budget 2026

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KUALA LUMPUR: Public healthcare spending should be raised from 2.4% to 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) in Budget 2026 as a long-term investment in the nation's health system, says the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

Its president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo (*pic*) said to fund healthcare

financing, MMA proposed removing the sugar subsidy and expanding the tax on sugary drinks, with 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 yesterday, Bernama reported.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said that for Budget 2026, priority should be in addressing the severe shortages and retention issues in the public healthcare workforce, because even the best policies cannot be delivered effectively without a strong workforce.

He said the association also welcomed the government's commitment to abolish the contract doctor system and urged that all remaining contract doctors be absorbed into permanent positions.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said greater support should also be given to postgraduate training through both the master's and parallel pathways.

He urged the government to look into the doctors' on-call allowances, which remained outdated at RM9.16 per hour.

The MMA also proposed the setting up of a national dashboard to map healthcare workers and services nationwide to ensure transparency and equitable distribution of resources.

Apart from that, Dr Thirunavukarasu said MMA called for stronger non-communicable diseases (NCDs) prevention via screenings at private clinics, outsourcing

national health checks and increasing mental health support.

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

He said MMA also suggested that digitalisation 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 serve as a platform to map participating private general practitioners' clinics.

Besides workforce, NCD and digitalisation concerns, Dr Thirunavukarasu said Budget 2026, to be tabled on Oct 10, must start preparing for elderly care, as its cost is projected to reach RM21bil or 1.08% 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.