

LETTER | MMA grateful for permanent positions but disappointed with process

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LETTER | The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) expresses its gratitude for the permanent positions recently awarded to junior doctors who applied for interim contract roles.

However, there is disappointment among some doctors with regard to how the placement process was conducted.

The lack of transparency on the criteria and technical issues which arose has led to frustration for some of the junior doctors.

A significant issue with the recent placements has been the lack of clarity surrounding the criteria for the selection of permanent positions.

Many junior doctors who have served diligently are now questioning why some colleagues were offered permanent roles while others were not and placed on the reserve list. The absence of transparency has led to disappointment and frustration among these doctors.

There have also been reports of system crashes and limited availability of state slots during the application process.

From the feedback received, the placement system experienced crashes upon release, preventing many applicants from accessing it.

By the time it was restored, certain states had already run out of slots, leaving doctors being forced to choose locations far from where they had been contributing effectively.

Many were willing to stay in places where they had already built experience and competency, but the lack of slots and system limitations left them without options.

As such, the government should consider allowing doctors already trained in a particular discipline to remain in their current posts when they are willing to do so.

Input from heads of departments should be strongly considered in transfer decisions. Relocating experienced junior doctors without consultation risks disrupting critical services, departmental needs and services even further.

It is also important to note that asking doctors to relocate when they are willing to continue serving in their current roles adds unnecessary costs to both the government and the doctors.

To address these issues, the MMA asks that selection criteria for permanent positions set by the Health Ministry and the Public Service Department be made known to all applicants. This will help greatly in gaining the trust of doctors and the general public and ensure fairness.

In terms of manpower planning, the MMA has many times called for transparency and the need to publish data on the manpower present at public healthcare facilities across the country.

This is important to prevent the maldistribution of healthcare workers, and this information should be augmented with the needs of each facility based on number of beds and services provided, such as:

- Daycare services and daycare operating theatres
- Inpatient and outpatient services
- Regular and specialty clinics

This can then show the numbers each facility needs in terms of house officers, medical officers, and specialists to run the service.

Comparing the actual staffing levels with the norms required will clearly identify any shortages or critical gaps.

This approach will support transparency, aid in fair resource distribution, and address critical staffing gaps across healthcare facilities.

The MMA stands with our junior doctors in calling for a fair, transparent, and effective placement process that supports their careers and helps the healthcare needs of the nation.

It is important to retain their confidence in the system which in turn will help retain our talented healthcare professionals in service to the nation.