

'Encourage public-private tie-ups to address specialist shortage'



By [Tharanya Arumugam](#) - November 13, 2022 @ 7:50am



Malaysia has fewer than 13,000 medical specialists and 28,000 of them will be needed by 2030.

KUALA LUMPUR: The dearth of specialist doctors in government service has been a long-standing issue that should be addressed by whichever political party or coalition that takes office after the 15th General Election.

Prominent neurosurgeon Professor Datuk Dr Ahmad Zubaidi Abdul Latif of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) said the government could enter tie-ups with private hospitals to address this issue and facilitate treatment for poor people.

"This is really an opportunity not to be missed. There are many experienced and qualified clinicians who have served as teachers in private hospitals and teaching hospitals.

"Tie-ups must be encouraged and implemented with firm commitment of academic responsibility, and steps must be taken to minimise the horrendous details of excessive bureaucracy," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Caretaker Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin in September revealed that there were fewer than 13,000 medical specialists in both the public and private healthcare sector, and 28,000 specialists were needed by 2030.

This was in view of the disease burden, including non-communicable diseases, which was expected to increase in 10 years as Malaysia headed towards an ageing nation.

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) reported that around 1,000 specialists had resigned from government service from 2011 until 2017. It warned that unless the issue was addressed, there would be a severe lack of manpower on the frontline within a decade.

MMA noted that it had given multiple suggestions to the Health Ministry, which included a sub-specialist allowance.

Dr Zubaidi, who is also UniSZA teaching hospital director, said the long-term solution must recognise financial responsibilities, and also social and definite medico-legal challenges of allowing patients to be examined by medical students to provide structured clinical training.

Public health expert Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said it was time for the healthcare sector to get rid of the public versus private dichotomy.