

Follow individual passion to achieve career success, says MMA President

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14-11- 2022 07:31 AM



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PETALING JAYA: Growing up, Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai had a strong interest in both medicine and law, while his father, who was a medical assistant, always looked up to doctors.

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president said this was probably why his father wanted him to take up medicine as a profession.

“After much thought and consideration, and with the full support from my parents, I decided on that career path,” Muruga told *theSun*.

“Even though I became a doctor, my other passion, which is law, was always on my mind. Over the years, I was getting more involved in various committees in the Malaysian Medical Association. I thought it was time that I equip myself with a law degree so that I could head the association more effectively.

"As parents, we want our children to get a good education and a good job. Many would want their children to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers or even bankers. These careers were considered to be among the most respected and desired professions at the time."

Muruga, who operates a clinic in Johor, said years ago, such professions (medicine and law) were considered the best in terms of income and stability. However, this perception has changed as more school leavers choose to take up IT, marketing, business and mass communications, among others, as their chosen career.

He said it is important for secondary school students from as early as Form Four to familiarise themselves with career options and learn what other professions involved.

This is not too difficult today with the availability of the internet where information is easily obtained, he added.

"What is important is that students should pursue what they are most passionate about. They will more than likely excel in their careers if they do so. It has to be something they are happy to do for the next 25 to 30 years."

Muruga said parents also need to educate themselves on available courses and be supportive of their childrens' career choices.

He added that parents should attend education fairs and career talks with their children and carry out research online on the courses available.

The MMA is planning to hold a career talk where experts from various industries will share their experiences with Form Four students and their parents.

Muruga said parents should take the time to educate themselves on the profession their child is passionate about.

"Don't look down on the profession that your children have chosen. We live in a very different time now where high school dropouts are among the world's wealthiest.

"For those who are interested or passionate about taking up medicine and want to pursue it in Malaysia, my advice is to find out more about what the profession involves and its career prospects.

"They must be aware that to practise medicine in Malaysia, one needs to be trained in the public healthcare system and complete mandatory service at a public healthcare facility for a few years."

Muruga said doctors need to be prepared to work long hours in an often stressful environment because they deal with matters of life and death. Children and parents need to be aware of this reality.

"Academic qualifications alone are not enough. The real training ground for doctors is in hospitals and clinics with real-life patients," Muruga said.

"There is also the issue of limited positions and the contract system in public healthcare.

"An organised visit or tour to a hospital may be one way to gain some understanding of a doctor's job scope, but it will not be sufficient," Muruga said, adding that it would be a good idea for those interested in medicine to speak to some of the senior and junior doctors.

On Nov 5, Muruga was elected as the Commonwealth Medical Association president for a two-year term at its three-day 26th triennial conference and council meeting programme in Kuala Lumpur.