

MMA: Healthcare reforms, sustainable financing should continue to be priorities under Health Ministry

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PETALING JAYA: Healthcare reforms and a more sustainable healthcare financing model must continue to be priorities under the Health Ministry, says the Malaysia Medical Association (MMA).

Its president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said he hoped to see much-needed improvements being carried out under the leadership of new Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa, particularly on manpower issues in Malaysia's public healthcare system.

"The contract doctors issue will be one of the main issues that we will be looking for Dr Zaliha to resolve.

"We also hope that the number of permanent positions being committed annually will be improved from the current 1,500," he said in a statement on Saturday (Dec 3).

There are currently an estimated 18,000 contract doctors in the public healthcare system with around 3,000 medical graduates subsequently entering each year, Dr Muruga said.

He also called for improvements towards healthcare access, especially in rural areas throughout the country,

"As Budget 2023 will likely be reworked and retabled, it is hoped that more meaningful allocations be set aside to improve healthcare access in particular for rural communities in East Malaysia," he said.

"More specialists are also needed for geriatric care as our ageing population is expected to increase by 15% in less than 10 years.

“To be ready, investment in both healthcare human resources and infrastructure has to be planned now for the future,” he said.

Dr Muruga said more effective strategies were needed to address rising cases of non-communicable diseases (NCD), adding that it was time to explore more collaborative efforts with private general practitioners as prevention at the primary care level would be key.

“Having been trained in the healthcare system while also running her own private practice, Dr Zaliha will be familiar with issues on the ground in both the public and private healthcare sectors.

“The MMA will also be writing to Dr Zaliha and hope to meet soon to address many of the said concerns,” he said.

Dr Zaliha, a first-term Sekijang MP from PKR, was appointed Health Minister under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim’s administration.