

MMA doesn't condone strike, but understands why some resort to it

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The Malaysian Medical Association urged contract doctors to abandon the idea of a strike as it could affect patient care at public healthcare facilities. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said it understood why healthcare workers would resort to a strike and that it should not come as a surprise to the government.

Past and present governments had not been able to address problems relating to contract doctors, especially regarding permanent positions, and this group felt they were getting nowhere, MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said.

“It is hard for them to go about their duties with this feeling of uncertainty,” he said in a statement.

However, the association did not condone a strike to force Putrajaya to resolve these problems, Muruga said.

He urged this group of contract doctors to abandon the idea of a strike as it could affect patient care at public healthcare facilities.

It could also see their colleagues take on additional responsibilities at overcrowded public healthcare facilities.

“At the same time, we urge the government to speed up their delivery on promises to help the contract doctors. They have waited too long. Let’s work towards solutions now before there is more brain drain.”

According to The Star, a group known as “Mogok Doktor Malaysia” claimed that about 8,000 contract doctors could take part in a strike next month.

The group said those on strike would take emergency or medical leave from April 3 to April 5 as a sign of protest. It did not, however, encourage the doctors to take part in any demonstrations.

Earlier today, health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah urged the doctors not to go on strike, saying it was not the best solution.

Noor Hisham warned that going on strike could come at the expense of human lives.

But Muruga said: “Someone also has to take responsibility if indeed there is a strike.

“Although the contract doctor issues are inherited and are a result of failed policies of the past, the health ministry and the government of the day must take full responsibility in the event of a strike.”

In assuring contract doctors that 1,500 of them would be made permanent this year, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said earlier today that his government would need three years to resolve the problems they faced.