

Medical association welcomes appointment of Dr Zaliha as new Health Minister

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KUCHING (Dec 4): The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) welcomes the appointment of Dr Zaliha Mustafa as Malaysia's new Health Minister.

Having been trained in the healthcare system and running her own private practice, Dr Zaliha will be familiar with the issues on the ground in both public and private healthcare, said MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai.

“Healthcare reforms must continue to be a priority and we hope to see the needed improvements carried out under the new leadership in particular on the manpower issues in our public healthcare system,” he said, adding that the contract doctor issue will be one of the main issues MMA will be looking to Dr Zaliha's leadership to resolve.

“We hope the number of permanent positions being committed for each year for the contract doctors can be improved from the current 1,500 as there are an estimated 18,000 contract doctors in the system with around 3,000 medical graduates entering the system each year,” he said in a statement yesterday.

As healthcare needs of the population are increasing, working towards a more sustainable healthcare financing model must also be among the ministry’s priorities, he stressed.

Healthcare access in the rural areas in the country also needs to improve. As the 2023 budget will likely be reworked and re-tabled, it is hoped that more meaningful allocations be set aside to improve healthcare access in particular for rural communities in East Malaysia, he added.

At the same time, he said more specialists are also needed particularly in geriatric care as our ageing population is expected to increase by 15 per cent in less than 10 years.

“To be ready for these challenges, investments in both healthcare human resources and infrastructure will need to be planned now for the long term,” he said, adding that more effective prevention strategies are needed to address the rising cases of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

It is time we explore more collaborative efforts with the 8,000 over private GPs nationwide as prevention at the primary care level will be key and MMA will be writing to Dr Zaliha and hopes to meet with her soon on addressing these many concerns, said Dr Muruga.