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MMA wants PM to look at overlooked areas in healthcare sector

By Veena Babulal - June 4, 2020 @ 10:07pm

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(File pic) Its president Dr N Ganabaskaran said the government should come to the aid of General Practitioner (GP) Clinics by giving them rental subsidies. -NSTP/ASYRAF HAMZAH

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called on the government to address some of the overlooked developments facing the healthcare sector in its economic recovery plan.

Its president Dr N Ganabaskaran said the government should come to the aid of General Practitioner (GP) Clinics by giving them rental subsidies.

He said these were the worst hit in the sector, with around 200 being forced to shutter during the Movement COntrol Order (MCO).

"We anticipate that more clinics will permanently shut down when the real economic impact of the Covid-19 situation and MCO sets-in.

"We hope the government will be able to provide at least 50 per cent in rental subsidies to help keep private clinics afloat. Overall patient visits had dropped by 60 per cent but GPs had to continue with payments for medical equipment that are on lease.

"We also hope that a loan moratorium can be introduced for medical equipment on lease."

"Staff overheads are also another high operational cost. It is hoped that the Socso (Social Security Organisation) staff salary subsidy can continue for another 6 months," he said in a statement to the New Straits Times.

He also hoped that the government could regulate the price of medicine from suppliers by enforcing a ban on price hikes for the next 6 months alongside a 90-day credit allowance for payments to suppliers.

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"The government can also help this sector by providing interest free loan facilities and buying services from the GPs such as non-communicable disease management, Ultrasound, Ultrasound for antenatal checkups, X-rays, dengue follow up blood tests and even Fundus camera."

"It is also hoped that the extended contracts and career pathways for current contract medical officers can be sorted out. With the "new normal" of ensuring proper physical distancing, staffing will need to be increased to meet the demands in our government healthcare facilities.

"This will require the lifting of the moratorium on new positions from the Ministry of Health. The job creation through such a move will further stimulate the economy."

Meanwhile, Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia (APHM) hoped the government would set up special budget for the treatment of its patients in private hospitals.

Its president Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh said this would cut the waiting time for patients while helping private hospitals that were also facing losses get back on their feet.

"This will cut the long waiting time for patients to get treatment while slashing queues for (medical) imaging, physiotherapy and selected surgeries."

"This will also help some of the private hospitals who are now experiencing fewer medical tourists and a decrease in the utilisation of their facilities."

He said that private hospitals were happy to discuss the cost aspects with the government.

"We are looking at a win-win situation and the patients will gain at the end of the day by getting their treatment early without paying a single sen."

Earlier, Kuljit pitched the idea to Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz in a meeting via Zoom.

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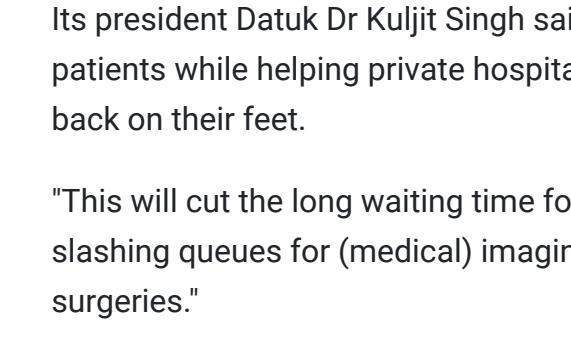

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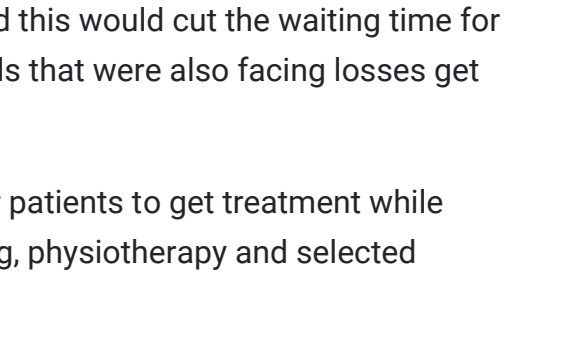

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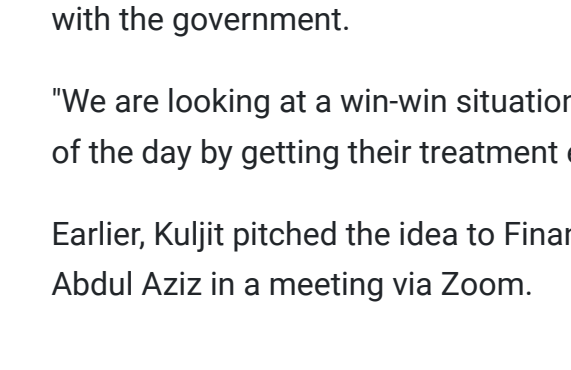

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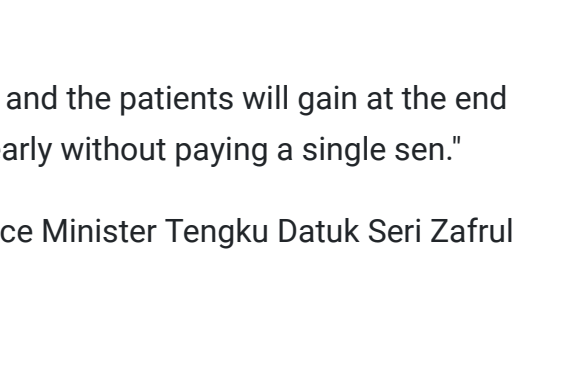

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