

MMA calls for comprehensive strategy to stem exodus of public-sector doctors

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The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called for a comprehensive strategy to retain doctors in the public healthcare system, warning that recruitment alone will not address the loss of medical officers. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called for a comprehensive strategy to retain doctors in the public healthcare system, warning that recruitment alone will not address the loss of medical officers.

MMA president Dr L. Sivanaesan said the resignation of 3,510 medical officers between 2024 and 2026, including 1,252 permanent doctors, was alarming.

He said the figures showed that job security alone was insufficient to keep doctors in public service.

"MMA welcomes the government's commitment to end the contract doctor system. However, permanent appointments are only part of the solution.

"We must address the root causes of doctors leaving rather than simply replacing those who resign. Comprehensive measures

are needed to resolve the issue," he said in a statement today.

Sivanaesan said these measures should include reviewing salaries, allowances and on-call rates to ensure remuneration reflects doctors' responsibilities, working hours and professional demands.

He also called for transparent promotion pathways, fairer career advancement opportunities and greater recognition of experience and qualifications to help doctors build long-term careers in public service.

"Expanding funded specialist training places through Master's and Parallel Pathway programmes was also necessary to ensure transparent, merit-based selection and remove administrative hurdles that delayed career progression," he said.

Sivanaesan said the government must also ensure adequate staffing, balanced workloads and reasonable working hours, particularly at understaffed facilities facing heavy workloads.

Measures to improve work-life balance should include adequate rest after demanding shifts, structured duty rosters and better workplace support.

"These steps must be accompanied by clear implementation timelines, dedicated financial allocations and measurable targets.

"Efforts to retain doctors cannot remain policy aspirations. They must be a priority that delivers tangible change," he said.

He stressed that doctors needed more than job security, including a working environment that valued their contributions, supported professional development and protected their well-being.

"Malaysia cannot afford to keep losing doctors while those who remain are forced to bear an increasingly heavy burden.

"Retaining doctors is not merely about protecting the medical profession. It is about safeguarding patient care and securing the future of the nation's public healthcare system," he said.