

Boost public healthcare budget, govt urged

► Coalition of 60 groups to submit memo to MPs over proposed cuts which may worsen shortages in manpower, facilities

BY T.C. KHOR
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: A coalition of more than 60 civil society organisations will submit a memorandum to MPs tomorrow urging the government to increase, rather than reduce, public healthcare spending as the system is under strain.

The groups, under the Save Public Healthcare System Campaign, are opposing a proposed cut of about RM4.65 billion to the Health Ministry's 2026 allocation, saying it may worsen shortages in manpower, facilities and essential resources.

PSM central committee member Gandipan Gopalan told *theSun* that the memorandum, led by Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj, would be submitted to MPs from

both the government and opposition.

The coalition questioned how savings of RM4.65 billion could be achieved solely through measures such as reducing overseas courses, hotel events and development projects, as reportedly outlined by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The government must provide a detailed and transparent breakdown of the proposed cuts, including the categories involved and the amount of savings expected from each category," it said in a statement signed by 60 non-governmental organisations and five individuals.

On April 30, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the ministry was expecting a

budget cut of about 10%, while assuring that core healthcare services would not be affected. With the ministry allocated RM46.5 billion under Budget 2026, the reduction would amount to about RM4.65 billion.

The coalition argued that Malaysia continues to spend below the level needed to meet growing healthcare demands. It said any savings should be reinvested into healthcare and education instead of being removed from those sectors.

"The country's public healthcare system requires greater investment," it said, reiterating its call for public healthcare spending to reach at least 5% of the GDP.

It also opposed funding cuts to university hospitals, citing fee increases of up to 233% at University Malaya Medical Centre from Jan 1 last year and said university hospitals play an important role in providing a more affordable alternative to private healthcare, particularly in urban areas.

It also called for a freeze on

further hikes until adequate public hospital alternatives are available.

The memorandum further proposes higher taxes on private hospitals benefiting from medical tourism, with revenue channelled to public healthcare. It noted that Penang recorded more than 527,000 foreign patients in 2025, generating over RM1.1 billion in revenue while government hospitals continued to face funding and staffing constraints.

The coalition said austerity efforts should target wastage, leakages, luxury government spending and non-essential mega projects before healthcare and education budgets are cut.

Among the organisations backing the memorandum besides PSM are Aliran, the Consumers' Association of Penang, the Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism, Islamic Renaissance Front, Muda, Sahabat Alam Malaysia, Women's Aid Organisation, Undi18 and several health, student and community-based groups.

Health director: Diabetes among biggest public health challenges

Sandra Jaboh

KUCHING: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly diabetes, continue to pose major public health challenges in Malaysia, said Dr Veronica Lugah.

According to the Sarawak Health Department director, data collected nationwide showed a significant number of Malaysians are affected by NCDs.

"At the national level, data collected across Malaysia shows that many Malaysians are affected by NCDs. The most common is diabetes mellitus. One in six Malaysians has diabetes.

"High blood pressure affects one in three Malaysians, while high cholesterol also affects one in three people," she said in her welcoming speech during the Kuching Sihat Run at Padang Merdeka yesterday.

Dr Veronica said another major health concern in Malaysia is excess body weight due to lack of physical activity.

"One in two Malaysians falls into the overweight or obese category. In fact, 54.4 per cent of the Malaysian population is classified as overweight or obese.

"This highlights the significant



(From third left) Dr Veronica, Wee, Rudzaimeir and others in a photo call prior to the flag off for the 3km category.

challenge we face in addressing weight-related health issues. Approximately one in two people do not engage regularly in sports or other forms of exercise and do not lead active lifestyles," she added.

She stressed the importance of adopting an active lifestyle to achieve a better quality of

life, saying that efforts to raise awareness and encourage healthy living practices must be carried out continuously to ensure that the public remains mindful of risk factors that may adversely affect their health.

Held under the theme 'Sihat Itu Saya', the programme attracted 1,849 participants and featured

3km, 5km, and 10km categories.

The run was flagged off by Kuching South mayor Datuk Wee Hong Seng on behalf of Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian.

Also present was Kuching North City Commission deputy director for community services Rudzaimeir Malek.

KKM kaji laksana sijil sakit digital

Langkah baharu bendung penyelewengan dan pemalsuan MC

Kuala Lumpur

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) sedang mengkaji pelaksanaan Sijil Cuti Sakit Digital (e-MC) sebagai langkah membendung penyelewengan, pemalsuan dan kecurian identiti pengamal perubatan oleh sindiket sijil sakit palsu.

Menteri Kesihatan Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad berkata, Bahagian Kesihatan Digital KKM diarahkan untuk segera membuat kajian bagi merealisasikan peralihan sistem cuti sakit kepada platform digital yang lebih selamat.

"Sijil cuti sakit (MC) hanya boleh diberikan doktor atau pegawai perubatan yang merawat pesakit. Ini satu perkara yang jelas. Kes salah laku etika ini isu yang agak serius dan KKM tidak akan berkompromi sama sekali.

"Mungkin ini juga satu isyarat jelas untuk kita mula bergerak ke arah sistem digital atau e-MC. Ini jalan ke hadapan untuk kita meminimumkan salah



guna," katanya pada selepas melancarkan Program Cik Era Naik MRT di stesen Transit Aliran Massa (MRT) Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) di sini, kelmarin.

Beliau berkata demikian sebagai mengulas kes membabitkan lima individu termasuk seorang jururawat di Pekan, Pahang direman bagi membantu siasatan kes penjualan dan pembelian MC yang disyaki tidak sah serta kewujudan sindiket laman web *Holiday Master* yang aktif memalsukan nama doktor dan klinik

"Sijil cuti sakit (MC) hanya boleh diberikan doktor atau pegawai perubatan yang merawat pesakit. Ini satu perkara yang jelas. Kes salah laku etika ini isu yang agak serius"

Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad

swasta sejak 2016.

Mengenai sindiket *Holiday Master* yang dikesan mencuri nombor pendaftaran profesional pengamal perubatan swasta bagi mengaut keuntungan, Dr Dzulkefly berkata, kes berkenaan kini di bawah siasatan Majlis Perubatan Malaysia.

"Majlis Perubatan Malaysia akan menjadi agensi utama yang menerajui tindakan ini dan mereka akan bekerjasama rapat dengan pihak penguatkuasa undang-undang. KKM juga akan melihat implikasi daripada sudut

pencerobohan data dalam bagi memastikan identiti doktor kita tidak sewenang-wenangnya disalah guna," katanya.

Dalam perkembangan lain, Dr Dzulkefly mengingatkan orang ramai tidak menggunakan teknologi kecerdasan buatan (AI) sebagai medium untuk mendiagnosis penyakit sendiri, terutamanya bagi penyakit kronik berisiko tinggi seperti kanser dan masalah jantung.

Beliau berkata, isu penggunaan AI dalam sektor kesihatan kini semakin kerap dibincangkan awam namun aspek keselamatan dan ketepatan klinikal pesakit tetap menjadi keutamaan yang tidak boleh dikompromi.

"Saya menggesa seandainya ada apa-apa masalah kesihatan, segera merujuk kepada pengamal perubatan sama ada di pihak awam mahu pun swasta, sama ada di klinik-klinik pengamal am (GP), klinik-klinik kerajaan, mahu pun hospital awam. Jangan tanggung ini sendiri," katanya.