

# Health sector gets RM1.7b shot in arm



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**KUALA LUMPUR** — The Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia said the RM1.7 billion increase in allocation is a boost for the health sector.

However, its deputy president, Dr Raj Kumar Maharajah, said he hoped the RM4 billion budget allocation for drugs, consumables and vaccines would not affect the public and that they would not be further burdened by increased medication costs.

“I hope the rakyat are not forced to buy expensive medications themselves as the budget for drugs and consumables has been reduced by RM600 million,” he said, adding that the association hoped for a mid-term review to increase the allocation for this.

“With a tight budget for consumables, clinicians will have to rely more on their clinical acumen, and less on tests and investigations, and exercise caution when prescribing expensive medication.”

Dr Raj Kumar said the government’s cooperation with the private sector to decongest government facilities was a good idea as facilities in the private sector were underutilised.

“However, the concern will be the remuneration, payment mechanism and other logistics. Otherwise, it is a good suggestion as it will reduce waiting time for patients and provide faster and more efficient treatment,” he said.

Dr Raj Kumar said general practitioners welcomed the move to upgrade 1Malaysia clinics and public health clinics, instead of setting up more 1Malaysia clinics.

“The government should tap the resources of the general practitioners and be partners in health with them. We should complement each other’s functions,

instead of competing with each other,” he said.

Universiti Malaya virologist Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said the RM80 million allocation to combat dengue and Zika virus should be used to acquire a better diagnostics system to screen blood products for the virus and prepare for what is coming next.

He said the government needed to outline the programme for the allocation and that it should not be used for fogging and drain-cleaning.

“What we need now is to be prepared. We don’t know what’s next when it comes to Zika and dengue,” he said.

“There’s no point wasting the RM80 million on doing the same thing for years.”

Dr Sazaly said education was crucial as 70 per cent of the public did not know dengue fever was caused by a virus.

He said better diagnostics and newer technology were needed in hospitals.

“The use of newer technology will allow early detection of dengue and Zika,” he said.

The last dengue allocation was announced in 2014 for Budget 2015, when RM30 million was allocated to enhance community awareness, buy dengue prevention equipment such as reagents, ultra-low volume and mist blower, and the distribution of 55,000 dengue test kits to private clinics for early detection.

Clinical Research Centre Perak head Datuk Dr Amar-Singh HSS said the RM80 million allocation was vital, especially when it came to the fight against Zika and dengue.

He said the allocation should be channelled towards research and prevention programmes.



The move to operate non-profit charitable hospitals with the private sector will ease congestion in government hospitals, says Dr Raj Kumar.

## Towards better healthcare

- 2,600 awaiting housemanship to be offered contracts by December.
- RM4.5b to enhance 340 1Malaysia clinics, 11 1Malaysia mobile clinics, 959 health clinics and more than 1,800 rural clinics.
- RM4b for supply of drugs, consumables, vaccines and reagents to all government hospitals and health facilities.
- Cooperation with private sector or NGOs to operate non-profit charitable hospitals based on government hospital rates.
- RM80m to combat dengue and Zika, and expand National Community Health Empowerment Programme.