



New shift system risks overburdening strained healthcare system, warns MMA

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The Malaysian Medical Association says there is insufficient manpower on the ground to reduce work hours under the new system, which affects doctors and dentists in government facilities.



The Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira said the new mechanism may strain the already overburdened public healthcare system. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has raised concerns over the health ministry's planned new shift system for healthcare workers, set to pilot in seven hospitals from Feb 1.

MMA president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira warned that the initiative, while aimed at reducing work hours and improving conditions for healthcare workers, might strain the already overburdened public healthcare system.

"There is not enough manpower on the ground to reduce work hours meaningfully.

“The current distribution of our healthcare workforce is struggling to manage high workloads, and over 70% of the population relies on public healthcare services,” he said in a statement.



Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira.

The new system, called “Waktu Bekerja Berlainan” or WBB, limits doctors and dentists in the public health service to 18 consecutive work hours, lower than the current 24 to 33 straight hours from on-call duties.

Kalwinder also said that the income of public medical officers (MOs) and specialists would be affected under this system, as on-call allowances would only apply to those on call during weekends and public holidays.

“MOs and specialists will work lesser hours but they stand to lose income. There is no allowance for working past 5pm on weekdays.

“Graveyard shifts are treated as regular work hours and included as part of the 45-hour work week,” he added.

He also warned that doctors in facilities unable to adopt the WBB system due to manpower shortages would see no benefit at all, further demoralising an already overworked workforce. Kalwinder also expressed disappointment over the delayed implementation of an across-the-board increase in on-call allowances, promised in the 2025 budget.

“The on-call allowance which has not seen an increase for more than a decade, serves as compensation for medical officers and specialists,” he said.

He urged the Medical Advisory and Action Committee to engage with clinics and stakeholders to assess the feasibility of the WBB system.

Kalwinder also called on the government to address longstanding manpower shortages and ensure the announced allowance hikes apply to all public healthcare workers, regardless of shift systems.

“Only by addressing manpower shortages and engaging stakeholders can we move toward meaningful reforms that benefit healthcare workers and the public,” he said.