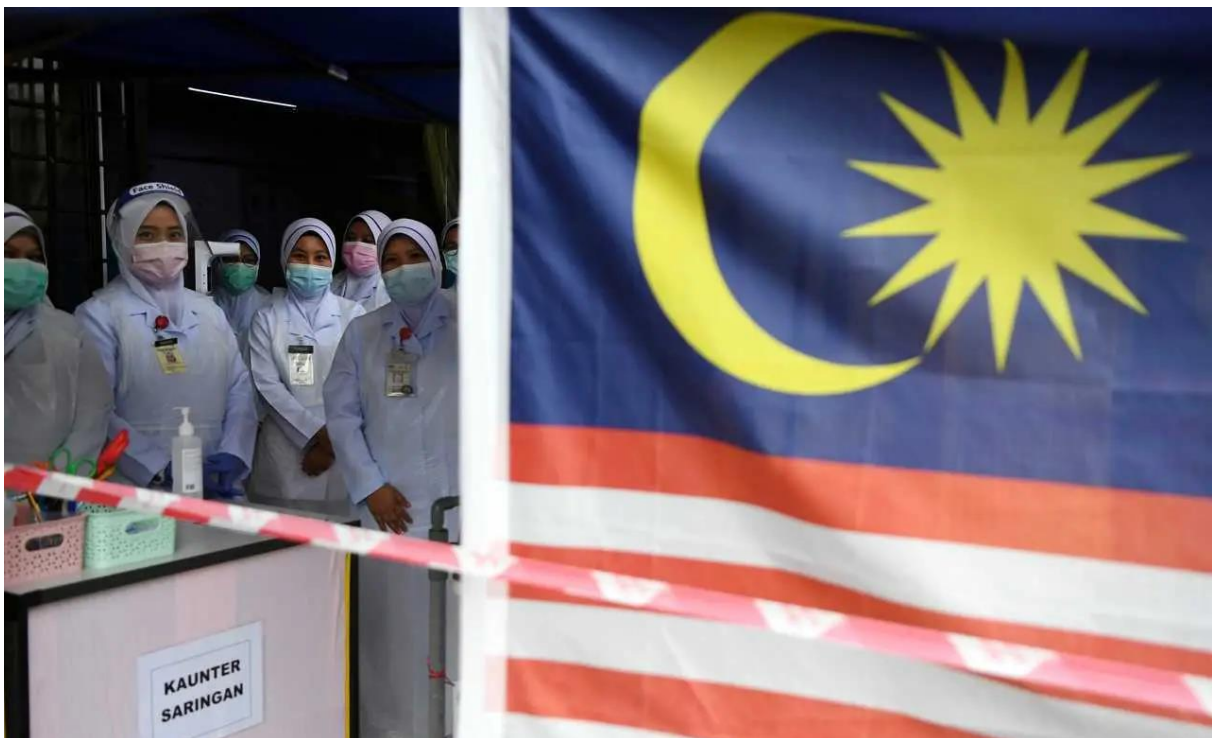


Find a long-term solution, medical group says after foreign nurses given green light

The Malaysian Medical Association says throughout the world, wealthier countries have been scouting for talent from developing or poorer countries.

[Ahmad Mustakim Zulkifli](#)

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Nurses seen at a clinic in Kuala Lumpur in this file picture. Photo: Bernama

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is urging the government to look towards a long-term solution following the health ministry's move to allow nurses trained abroad to work at private health facilities in the country.

MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said the health ministry should collaborate with the private sector and create a central dashboard for the posting of health workers as well as the plans for the next 10 to 15 years.

Speaking to MalaysiaNow, she said it was now the trend for Malaysian nurses to leave the country for more attractive salaries and better career prospects elsewhere.

"All around the world, wealthier countries have been scouting for talent from developing or poorer countries – a global concern that has been highlighted by the World Health Organization," she said.

"In response, the health ministry needs to look into better long-term planning for the healthcare workforce, taking into account the healthcare needs of the population, projected population growth and an increasing ageing population."

Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa had said that private healthcare facilities could take in foreign-trained nurses from Oct 1 onwards, subject to several conditions.

For instance, the number of foreign nurses cannot exceed 40% of the total at the facility in question, and they must sit for the Malaysian Nursing Board Qualification Examination for Foreign Trained Nurses conducted by the Malaysian Nursing Board.

Public health expert Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar however disagreed with the decision, saying many local nurses were still struggling to find a job.

"The health ministry needs to show the statistics – how many nurses are there now, against how many are needed," he said.

Deputy Health Minister Lukanisman Awang Sauni previously said that there was a shortage of nurses, attributing this to more attractive salary offers in other countries.

Azizan also asked if Malaysia had enough trained workers to manage its demographic changes.

"We have been firefighting all this while because there is no clear policy where the planning of the healthcare workforce is concerned," she said.

She said private health clinics with X-ray facilities, for example, were facing a shortage of radiographers, to the point where they had been forced to end such services for their patients.

"The health ministry should allow general practitioners to hire foreign radiographers as an interim solution, and within three to five years, the issue must be resolved," she said.

"MMA has met with the relevant units in the ministry about this matter, but to date, there has been no progress."

The Malayan Nurses Union meanwhile said that the Covid-19 pandemic had thrown a spanner in the works for many nursing students, especially in terms of hands-on experience.

Its president Norhayati Abdul Rashid said the health system could not open new admissions as nurses need three years of training before they can be registered.

"So we are at the acute stage of the labour shortage problem," she said.

And while both public and private hospitals had returned to normal operations post Covid-19, she said, many services had been delayed or worsened by an increase in the number of patients.

"The public health sector has been disrupted by manpower problems, although not to the point where its services must be terminated," she said.

"But the private sector is experiencing a huge vacuum which is interfering with its health services."