

Contract hospital cleaners deserve frontline treatment, says MMA

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The Malaysian Medical Association says hospital cleaners are part of the healthcare ecosystem and should be recognised for their important role. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: As frontliners in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, contract hospital cleaners should not be exploited in their terms of employment, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said today.

Its president, Dr Koh Kar Chai, called for the human resources ministry to take urgent action on the matter as it could greatly affect public healthcare facilities.

“Healthcare facilities are hotbeds of infections due to high exposure to the sick each day, and therefore requires frequent cleaning and disinfecting.

“Any contamination can affect the quality of healthcare provided,” he said in a statement today.

Koh also expressed shock that there were hospital cleaners who had never received a wage increase despite working for many years, and that some were being made to work in multiple locations in a single day.

“Some of the workers also never had their annual leave days adjusted to commensurate with their years of service,” he said.

“Earning a monthly salary of RM1,200 for 15 years is totally unacceptable. How can a person be motivated to progress or grow in any organisation if there is no increase in their wages for that long?

“Cleaners are part of the healthcare ecosystem and should be recognised for their important role. The duties of cleaners are labour intensive.

“They should not be made to take on two or three jobs to make ends meet.”

Calling upon the human resources minister to step in and address the issue, Koh said the ministry must also ensure that the contract system was not being abused.

“Fair and transparent hiring policies must be created whether for permanent positions or via a contract,” he added.

Two days ago, FMT reported health minister Khairy Jamaluddin promising to find a “comprehensive solution” to problems faced by contract hospital workers.

He made the pledge after receiving a memorandum from the National Union of Workers in Hospital Support and Allied Services, which had demanded that contract hospital workers and ancillary workers be reinstated into the civil service, as was the case before 1997.

The union also wanted better pay and working conditions after its members were left out of wage increments and pandemic allowances.

It also sought the government's intervention in companies which discouraged union activities after it said that workers had been threatened and intimidated by their employers.