

Doctors back call for businesses to open past midnight

By **Samuel Chua** - January 20, 2022 8:45 AM

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Restaurant owners in Bangsar recently asked the government to allow them to open past midnight.

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) and a former deputy minister have backed calls for businesses to be allowed to open past midnight, saying shorter hours will not stop Covid-19 from spreading.

MMA president Dr Koh Kar Chai said strict adherence to SOPs and not the length of business hours would curb the spread of Covid-19.

“If people follow the SOPs strictly, business hours can be extended,” he told FMT. “But it will need to be controlled. Checks will still need to be carried out to ensure that SOPs are followed.

“The virus does not choose a specific time to infect people. It spreads when it is given the opportunity, when people let their guard down.”

Koh said the public should be reminded that those who were fully vaccinated and had received their booster shots could still be infected and spread the virus to others.

“Face masking, physical distancing, hand sanitising and good ventilation at premises need to be emphasised,” he said.

Former deputy health minister Dr Lee Boon Chye called for efforts to sharpen the focus on reducing overcrowding instead of limiting business hours.



Dr Koh Kar Chai.

“Also, now that vaccination coverage is high and daily Covid-19 cases aren’t spiking, it should be time to remove restrictions on operating hours,” he said.



Dr Lee Boon Chye.

“This will then be consistent with health minister Khairy Jamaluddin’s statement allowing Chinese New Year gatherings and calling for the monitoring of symptoms.”

On Sunday, Khairy said the Chinese New Year SOPs would be slightly eased compared with last year as many people had received their Covid-19 shots.

Lee added that with the country’s transition to the endemic phase, SOPs should also be simplified further to prevent confusion and irregularities in enforcement.

Restaurant owners in Bangsar have been urging the government to allow them to open past midnight and have roped in former prime minister Najib Razak to make their voices heard.

They say that National Security Council's rules make no mention of a cap on business hours for restaurants, cafes and pubs. Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the police, however, have not allowed them to open past midnight.