

Ensure sufficient manpower when extending operating hours at govt health clinics, says MMA

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PETALING JAYA: While the extension of operating hours at 52 selected government health clinics is a necessary interim solution to ease the congestion at public healthcare facilities, it is important to ensure that there is sufficient manpower at these facilities, says the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

“MMA welcomes the move to extend the operating hours at 52 selected government health clinics as it may be necessary as an immediate and interim solution to ease the current congestion seen at government healthcare facilities,” said MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai.

He added in a statement on Monday (March 13) that there needs to be sufficient manpower to ensure staff are not overworked.

“Sufficient doctors, nurses and support staff will be crucial to its success,” said Dr Muruga Raj.

He said this may also provide former doctors who are no longer in the civil service including those who did not get permanent posting to come back and serve.

“For a number of private general practitioners (GPs) whose clinics close early, it may also be an opportunity for these doctors to serve and earn an additional income. MMA notes that there are around 4,000 new private clinics in the country,” he said.

“Some of these clinics have been set up and run by young doctors who were previously contract doctors in the system.”

“While the extended hours may be a quick fix to the current level of congestion seen at public healthcare facilities, the ministry must also look into the mid and long term sustainable solutions,” he added.

Dr Muruga Raj said outsourcing green zone cases to private GP clinics under the Madani Medical Scheme announced under Budget 2023, are among the solutions that can be considered by the government to reduce congestion.

“The MMA hopes there will be an update on this soon from the Health Ministry,” he said.

MMA had for years proposed the involvement of private GPs as a necessary step to strengthen primary care in the country.

“The private GPs play a key role in the healthcare management of the population and should be included in government healthcare policies,” he added.

Dr Muruga was commenting on Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa’s statement on Sunday (March 12) where she had urged contract doctors to participate in the initiative to extend operating hours at public health clinics to ensure its success.

Dr Zaliha said the support and cooperation would help the ministry to reduce the workload among health workers and provide the best service to patients.