

MMA Opposes One-Year Health Screening Window For Foreign Workers

By CodeBlue | 18 July 2022

The Malaysian Medical Association says FOMEMA's health screening period can be extended from 30 to 60 days, but not 365 days as this raises the risk of imported cases of infectious disease.



Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Koh Kar Chai speaks at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur on May 10, 2022. Picture courtesy of MMA.

KUALA LUMPUR, July 18 — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) today rejected the Home Ministry's decision to extend health screenings of foreign workers to 365 days after their arrival in Malaysia.

Under the current system, employers have a 30-day window to ensure that all new foreign employees are screened for infectious

diseases via FOMEMA Sdn Bhd, the concessionaire appointed to operate the Foreign Workers' Medical Examination Screening System in the peninsula on behalf of the Ministry of Health (MOH).

“As we will be expecting a large number of foreign workers into the country to address shortages in manpower, we could perhaps consider extending the period for the FOMEMA health screening to 60 days.

“A one-year window for screening is too long and will increase the risk of infectious diseases being imported into the country,” MMA president Dr Koh Kar Chai said in a statement.

Dr Koh highlighted a recent resurgence in tuberculosis, a bacterial infection that mainly targets the lungs, and even leprosy, a disease which affects the skin, nerves, and mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes.

Imported cases of these two communicable diseases have been detected in foreign workers that underwent the screening process, said the head of the doctors' group.

“Ignoring these other threats to the health of our population can also potentially put a strain on our health care system if diseases go undetected and spread in the community,” Dr Koh said.

“The private GPs (general practitioners) registered with FOMEMA are well placed and have the capacity to carry out these mandatory tests.”