

Minimum wage hike will burden GPs, says MMA

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Private clinics are considered low-income earning businesses as their consultation fees are capped, says Dr Koh Kar Chai.

PETALING JAYA: The increase in the minimum wage from RM1,200 to RM1,500 will burden small clinics run by general practitioners (GPs), according to the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

In a statement today, MMA president Dr Koh Kar Chai said these clinics were “up in arms” over the minimum wage hike, which will be enforced on businesses with a minimum of five staff.

He hoped the government would discuss the issue with the healthcare sector before implementing it.

He said these clinics, especially the standalone clinics, were considered low-income earning businesses, with their consultation fees being capped under the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 and their overall charges being controlled by third-party administrators.

According to Koh, these GPs had no avenue to increase their charges to compensate for the increase in operating expenditure caused by the imposition of a minimum wage.

“Private clinics are not like other sectors where price increases can be passed on to the consumers. The healthcare practice is heavily regulated,” he said.

Koh added that most staff in these private clinics were not trained nurses or medical assistants.

“A minimum wage will allow for a higher quality of living but the provision of quality primary healthcare at affordable rates to the public is also essential to the maintenance of the health of our nation,” he said.

The minimum wage hike, which was approved by the government on March 19, will take effect on May 1.

The move, which was welcomed by trade unions, notably the Malaysian Trades Union Congress, is being opposed by groups representing businesses in various sectors.