

Report: Medical associations urge health minister to address concerns on body cams worn by its officers



Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai was quoted as saying the benefits potentially derived from the initiative will depend on how the move is implemented. – Picture by Ahmad Zamzahuri

By Ben Tan

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 15 — Several medical associations have urged Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa to address public concerns on privacy issues possibly arising from her ministry's implementation of body cameras.

The move will see the body cameras being used to monitor activity carried out by the Health Ministry's enforcement officers.

The Vibes reported that Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai as saying the benefits potentially derived from the initiative will depend on how the move is implemented.

“The concerns will be about privacy and the possible abuse of such devices.

“The Health Ministry must ensure that there is full accountability,” Dr Muruga told the news outlet in a report published today.

He was commenting on the introduction of body cameras for Health Ministry enforcement officers earlier this week in a bid to ensure their safety and uphold transparency while on duty.

Dr Muruga said the Health Ministry has not initiated any engagement sessions with MMA prior to the decision to use body cameras, adding that he was unaware of any upcoming stakeholder meetings related to its implementation.

He hoped that more details on the planned implementation (body cameras) can be revealed, and proper stakeholder discussions held before the ministry goes ahead with this move.

The Malaysian Pharmacists Society president Amrahi Buang also called for a stakeholder meeting to educate the public and healthcare practitioners on their rights, the enforcement officers’ powers, and other related rules.

He said despite the pros of using body cameras outweigh the cons, the ministry must ensure that transparency be upheld to avoid compromising public rights.

“In line with the current government’s stance on transparency, the ministry should disclose the related standard operating procedures, policies, and legislation to increase public confidence in the body cameras not tampering with their rights,” he told *The Vibes*.

Amrahi added that confidence in the initiative can be achieved if the ministry provides clarification on some matters, including who can access the footage recorded on the body cameras as well as how the data will be stored and protected.

“In cases of enforcement officers damaging property during raids or wrongful prosecution, can the footage be used by the public for compensation purposes?” he questioned

On Monday, Dr Zaliha launched the initiative that will see the Health Ministry’s Public Health and Pharmacy enforcement officers don the body cameras.

“The use of body cameras will also help retain the integrity and improve the image of the ministry. It will also help ensure the safety and welfare of the enforcement officers,” she said in her speech during the ministry’s monthly assembly in Putrajaya.

The use of body cameras is aimed at addressing issues such as threats, abuse, assault and even bribery which are often faced by officers during their enforcement rounds.

The implementation will provide appropriate proof or counter-evidence for the enforcement officers against various accusations during enforcement operations.