

Screen foreign workers as soon as they arrive, says MMA

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The Malaysian Medical Association says the government should revert to the 30-day window to screen foreign workers or extend it to 60 days if needed. PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has urged the home ministry to reverse its decision to allow a 365-day window for foreign worker health screenings.

MMA said a one-year window for foreign worker health screenings was too long and would increase the risk of infectious diseases being imported into the country.

Its president, Dr Koh Kar Chai, questioned the home ministry's decision to allow the 365-day window, and asked if proper consultation with public health experts had been done before the decision.

"The health and human resource ministries should insist that screenings be done as early as possible once these workers arrive," he said in a statement. He urged the home ministry to reverse its decision and suggested reverting the duration to the previous requirement of a 30-day window or extending the duration to 60 days if needed.

Koh said private general practitioners registered with FOMEMA had the capacity to carry out these mandatory tests.

“While we are in urgent need of such workers right now, we cannot allow an additional health burden on our country which may negate the efforts of the home minister,” he said.

He noted that there had been a resurgence in tuberculosis and even leprosy cases, adding that previously, imported cases from foreign workers had been detected during the screening process.

He cautioned that if diseases went undetected and spread within the community, the healthcare system could potentially be put under strain.

“After two-and-a-half years of the pandemic, we should understand by now the importance of safeguarding the health of the population against infectious diseases,” he said.