

AKHBAR : THESUN DAILY
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Overpriced, unhealthy fare at food festivals raise concern

Line between fair charges and exploitation depends on how much rates exceed costs borne by vendors: Academic

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PETALING JAYA: Overpriced and unhealthy offerings at Malaysian food festivals have become a common concern, with vendors often prioritising profits over the quality and nutritional value of their products.

Despite the high prices, visitors continue to be drawn to the festive atmosphere as they are driven by the "fear of missing out," which often pushes buyers to spend more to avoid being excluded from unique or culturally rich experiences.

A food festival held recently in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur gained widespread attention online as local vendors sparked a buzz with their pricey offerings.

Celebrity Mark Adam was a hot topic for selling three *satay* sticks at RM24.90 while vendor Aunty Ja made waves on TikTok with her latest creation, the "Tricolour Chocolate" priced at RM60 per cup.

Universiti Teknologi Mara Academy of SME and Entrepreneurship Development coordinator Dr Mohamad Idham Md Razak said pricing policy at food festivals is generally higher compared with street vendors or restaurants as the value proposition is special.

He said the social and psychological perks, such as networking, entertainment or following one's passions, could be worth the cost to many people.

"Food festivals sell themselves as a kind of luxury or pleasure consumption product, appealing to consumers who want to pay a



Sharifa Ezat expressed concern over the rise of sweet and junk food vendors at food festivals, where visitors continue to indulge in unhealthy fare despite the high prices. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ THESUN

premium for the experience and not the product."

He said demand often rises due to the unique experiences and rare products customers value but the line between fair pricing and exploitation depends on how much prices exceed the vendor's costs, such as rent and wages.

"It is true that there are higher costs that merchants have to bear during these events, such as booth rental, event promotion and temporary staffing, which are added to the price.

"Such costs have a big influence on how food is priced during an event as it directly influences the cost structure of the vendor."

He warned that food festivals, while celebrated as a source of tourism and culinary variety, may drive regional food inflation.

He said short-term high demand for specific ingredients and meals, particularly during festivals, often lead to price hikes as stores

capitalise on consumer willingness to pay more, potentially setting a precedent for future pricing.

"Food festivals contribute, if only for a short period of time in their own realm, to inflationary pressures in local food supply but are not a major source of long-term price inflation."

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia public health medicine specialist Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh expressed concern over the rise of sweet and junk food vendors at food festivals, where attendees continue to indulge in unhealthy options despite the high prices.

She said pricey food at these festivals is often justified by vendors as part of covering overhead costs, while providing healthy food options still seems to be a low priority for vendors at this stage.

"Food festivals often lack specific guidelines on what types of food can be sold, leading to an abundance of junk and fast food

options. Nutritional guidelines, such as calorie limits, are not strictly enforced, leaving vendors with little oversight."

She said many vendors at food festivals prioritise profit over considerations such as calorie content, health benefits or the suitability of their offerings.

According to World Factbook Central Intelligence Agency data from 2016 to 2024, Malaysia has seen a significant obesity prevalence, with 19.7% of adults classified as obese.

Sharifa Ezat stressed that food vendors at such events have a responsibility to ensure their offerings are not only appealing but also nutritious and ethically prepared.

"This is an area in which the Health Ministry, in collaboration with local governments, could introduce nutritional standards to ensure healthier choices at a reasonable price at these events."

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NATION

THE STAR PG: 3 NATION 16/1/2025 (THURSDAY)

On-call shifts capped at 18 hours

Pilot project set to boost officers' well-being, patient safety, says Health Ministry

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PETALING JAYA: Doctors and dentists at selected government healthcare facilities will see their on-call shifts capped at 18 hours, down from the current limit of between 24 and 33, under a Health Ministry pilot project that starts next month.

Their on-call allowance rate has also been raised by between RM55 and RM65 as announced in Budget 2025.

However, with the Waktu Bekerja Berlainan (WBB) system, their take-home pay will be less as they will only be able to claim for active calls on weekends and public holidays, and not for weekday shifts.

According to a circular signed by the ministry's medical development division director Datuk Dr Mohd Azman Yacob, the ministry had tabled the WBB system to the Public Service Department (PSD) on Dec 5, 2024.

Mohd Azman said the WBB is being introduced to improve officers' quality of life and to ensure doctors attending to



Shift limit: Doctors and dentists at designated government healthcare institutions will have their on-call shifts limited to 18 hours.

patients are not exhausted from long working hours for the sake of patients' safety.

Under the WBB system, the active on-call rates for weekdays and public holidays are RM275 for medical officers (MOs) and RM315 for specialists.

As for the current system, MOs

are entitled to an active on-call allowance of RM220 on weekends and public holidays and RM200 on weekdays.

Specialists are entitled to RM250 on weekends and public holidays and RM230 on weekdays.

However, with WBB, they will

not be able to claim an active on-call allowance on weekdays.

Claims for passive on-call allowance remain.

Even with the new system, the 24-hour service at hospitals will remain, and services can be offered without requiring a drastic increase in manpower.

This will mean the on-call duty hours will be lower than the current 24 to 33 hours.

The pilot run will begin at seven hospitals on Feb 1.

The seven are the Paediatric Department of Hospital Tunku Azizah; the Medical Department of Hospital Slim River; the Obstetrics and Gynaecology department of Hospital Putrajaya; the Orthopaedic Department of Raja Permaisuri Bainun and Melaka hospitals; the Emergency and Trauma Department of the Melaka and Sultanah Bahiyah hospitals; as well as the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Department of Hospital Tengku Ampuan Rahimah.

The circular also included the WBB guideline.

"The basis of implementing this WBB is the service's interest based on the availability of manpower and facilities," the circular read.

Active on-call allowances will not be provided for those working late shifts after 5pm on weekdays, as these shifts will be considered as regular working hours that will be accounted into the 45-hour working hours per week.

The pilot project will run for three months.

The WBB will be expanded in the second phase, which will include surgery and anaesthesiology.

The third phase, which will begin later this year, will be the stabilisation and observation phase.

Phase 1 of the programme is set to cost the government RM2,169,180.

On Oct 16, *The Star* reported that the medical fraternity wanted the government to do away with the 30-hour on-call shift system, which has led to physical and mental exhaustion.

This came after the sister of a medical officer who died in a Penang hospital said she suspected her 31-year-old sister's untimely death from fluid in her lungs was caused by overwork and exhaustion.

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA
MUKA SURAT : 9
RUANGAN : FORUM

UTUSAN MALAYSIA M/S 19 FORUM 16/1/2025 (KHAMIS)

Larangan rokok di tempat kerja boleh tingkat produktiviti

PERSATUAN Pengguna Pulau Pinang (CAP) mengucapkan tahniah kepada kerajaan kerana berjaya memperluaskan kawasan larangan merokok di bawah Akta Kawalan Produk Merokok Kesihatan Awam 2024. Melalui akta ini bermakna semua bangunan premis tempat kerja dikategorikan sebagai salah satu kawasan larangan merokok.

Tindakan kerajaan memperkenalkan larangan ini adalah satu inisiatif yang sangat progresif kerana ia melindungi kepentingan majoriti rakyat daripada ancaman asap rokok yang berbahaya.

Asap rokok, termasuk asap terpakai, adalah salah satu bahan pencemar udara yang paling berbahaya dan boleh mendatangkan kesan buruk kepada kesihatan.

Kajian menunjukkan bahawa pendedahan kepada asap rokok boleh menyebabkan pelbagai penyakit serius seperti kanser paru-paru, penyakit jantung dan asma.

Bahkan melalui akta ini juga membolehkan hak bukan perokok untuk menikmati persekitaran yang bebas daripada bahan berbahaya ini dihormati.

Sebelum ini, pekerja dan pelanggan yang memasuki tempat kerja selalunya tiada pilihan selain menghirup udara tercemar jika larangan merokok tidak dikuatkuasakan.

Sehubungan itu, larangan merokok bukan sekadar langkah kesihatan awam, malah usaha memberi kebebasan kepada setiap individu untuk menikmati persekitaran yang bebas daripada ancaman kesihatan.

Pelaksanaan ini di tempat kerja juga bukan sahaja melindungi kesihatan pekerja daripada risiko penyakit akibat terdedah kepada asap rokok, malah meningkatkan produktiviti pekerja.

Kita boleh mengambil contoh yang berjaya apabila mewujudkan larangan merokok di premis makanan dan bagaimana langkah ini memberi manfaat kepada kesihatan awam.

Selepas larangan ke atas premis makanan



Pelaksanaan larangan merokok di tempat kerja juga bukan sahaja melindungi kesihatan pekerja daripada risiko penyakit akibat terdedah kepada asap rokok, malah meningkatkan produktiviti pekerja."

dikuatkuasakan, pelanggan boleh menikmati kualiti udara jauh lebih baik dan pengalaman menjamu selera yang lebih selesa.

Selain itu, larangan itu juga meningkatkan kesedaran orang ramai tentang kesan bahaya merokok, sekali gus menggalakkan lebih ramai individu berhenti merokok.

Dari sudut pandangan CAP, larangan merokok di tempat kerja, baik di sektor kerajaan mahupun swasta, merupakan langkah progresif yang perlu disokong sepenuhnya.

Ia memastikan hak pengguna untuk menikmati persekitaran yang bebas daripada pencemaran asap rokok, melindungi kesihatan pekerja dan pelanggan serta mencerminkan tanggungjawab sosial majikan.

Dengan penguatkuasaan yang ketat dan sokongan daripada semua pihak, larangan ini boleh menjadi titik perubahan utama dalam meningkatkan kualiti hidup rakyat Malaysia.

NV SUBBAROW

Pegawai Pendidikan dan Aktivist Anti Rokok
Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang (CAP)



KEJAYAAN program larangan merokok di premis makanan yang memberi manfaat kepada kesihatan awam boleh dijadikan contoh bagi Akta Kawalan Produk Merokok Kesihatan Awam 2024 dilaksanakan di tempat kerja.