

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NATION

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THE STAR M/S 5 NATION 26/1/25 (AHAD)

WBB cancellation welcomed

Groups express relief over scrapping of healthcare shift system

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PETALING JAYA: The decision to cancel the contentious Waktu Bekerja Berlainan (WBB) pilot project is appropriate, says Malaysian Medical Association (MMA), which also hails the move to set up a task force to improve the healthcare delivery sector.

MMA president Datuk Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira described the decision as appropriate, given the widespread concerns that have been raised by the association and doctors' groups about its potential impact on the affected doctors and public healthcare services.

MMA also fully supports the Health Ministry's decision to set up a dedicated task force aimed at strengthening healthcare delivery and improving the scheduling of working hours.

"The appointment of Tan Sri Dr Abu Bakar Suleiman, a former Health director-general, as the head of this task force is a wel-

come choice," Dr Kalwinder said in a statement yesterday.

The association, he added, also looks forward to engaging further with the task force to address issues related to WBB and on-call allowances.

MMA also expressed its gratitude to the Health Minister and his team for engaging with the association on Thursday to discuss the WBB on-call allowances and other challenges faced by public sector doctors.

On Friday, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the proposed WBB shift system, which triggered public backlash recently, has been cancelled pending further studies by the government.

The contract doctors' movement, Hartal Doktor Kontrak, which has been vocal against the implementation of WBB, also expressed relief with the latest decision.

"Thank you Cabinet and YB Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad for listening to our concerns. A

more thorough review must be conducted for policies like this to bring more benefits rather than harm," the group said on X.

However, Galen Centre for Health and Social Policy chief executive Azrul Mohd Khalib said the decision to cancel the proposed WBB shift system is disappointing but not unexpected due to the strong opposition to it from stakeholders.

While he described the formation of the special task force as long-overdue, Azrul said the call for equitable increases in on-call allowances for all relevant healthcare workers remains unanswered.

"This issue is not just about ensuring fair and equitable compensation on on-call services, and better scheduling of working hours. It would be a mistake to reduce the recent controversy to these two issues," he said in a statement.

Through the task force, he said, it is an opportunity for the authorities to properly recognise,

address and respond to the ongoing workforce crisis caused by "vicious cycles of unmanageable workloads and burnout, driving increasing number of staff out of the health service".

Such issues also affect other healthcare workers such as nurses, who recently spoke out against their 45-hour work week under the Public Service Remuneration System (SSPA) shift system, he added.

"Each day, dozens of specialists, doctors and nurses across the country are submitting their resignation letters.

"How do we ensure that the health services are able to continue to provide quality and safe care to patients in the face of excessive workloads, a diminishing workforce, punishing and unreasonable rotas, as well as rising demand?"

"Tired doctors are more likely to make mistakes. It will be unsafe and unsustainable.

"We need long-term solutions and recommendations, and the



resources and political will to implement them," Azrul said.

Under the pilot project planned to take place on Feb 1, 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 hours.

With the WBB system, the take-home pay of doctors and dentists at selected government healthcare facilities will be less as they will only be able to claim for active calls on weekends and public holidays, and not for weekday shifts.

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MUKA SURAT : 5
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Volunteer medics on standby for emergencies

By LO TERN CHERN
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GEORGE TOWN: St John Ambulance of Malaysia (SJAM) will be on standby during Chinese New Year for emergencies.

Themed Ops Selamat Ambulance Standby, the effort will focus on two periods – first during the exodus on Jan 25 to 27 and Feb 1 to 3 during the post-celebration travel.

SJAM Penang commander Datuk Seri Dr Yee Thiam Sun said volunteers would work in eight to 12-hour shifts, with each team comprising four trained first aiders including drivers, crew members and first-aid assistants.

“The initiative marks our unwavering commitment to public safety and emergency response, especially during one of the busiest festive seasons.

“Since 1995, SJAM has been providing emergency ambulance standby services along major highways nationwide during the peak festive travel season.

“Locations such as the Juru toll plaza on the North-South Expressway and the Kubang



At the ready: SJAM members waiting on standby along the Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu Expressway in George Town. – K.T. GOH/ The Star

Semang toll plaza on the Butterworth-Kulim Expressway have become critical points for emergency response due to the heavy traffic and unfortunate rise in road accidents,” said Dr Yee.

Last year, after carefully studying the trend and needs, SJAM made a bold but strategic shift by stationing its operations closer to the community in Air Itam instead of along the highways.

“This decision has proven to be

impactful by enabling us to respond to a broader range of emergencies and maximise our resources,” Dr Yee said before launching the service at the organisation’s headquarters on Jalan Grove here yesterday.

He added that the 24-hour Relau Hotspot 999 Base would operate throughout the festive season.

Air Itam assemblyman Joseph Ng, who contributed RM3,000 to the organisation, thanked the vol-

unteers for their steadfast dedication towards the community.

He urged the community to be mindful of the emergency services by giving way on the road at critical times and to provide their support through blood donations to help save lives.

Also present at the ceremony were SJAM deputy state commander Karen Lim Jia Dih and southwest area commander Datuk Seri Syed Aidid Syed Mohamed.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 9

RUANGAN : NATION

NST M/S 9 NATION 26/1/2025 (AHAD)
STAGGERED WORKING HOURS

MMA lauds govt decision to shelve pilot project

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THE Malaysian Medical Association and Hartal Doktor Kontrak welcomed the government's decision to cancel the staggered working hours pilot project to allow further studies on its potential impact.

MMA president Datuk Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira said the move was a step in the right direction, highlighting the association's concerns.

"This is the appropriate decision, considering the concerns raised by MMA, other doctors, and medical groups about its potential impact on both affected doctors and public healthcare services," he said yesterday.

Dr Kalwinder also expressed the association's full support for the Health Ministry's establishment

of a dedicated task force to address healthcare delivery and improve work-hour scheduling.

He commended the appointment of former Health director-general Tan Sri Datuk Dr Abu Bakar Suleiman as its head.

"His vast experience will contribute significantly to achieving its intended objectives."

Kalwinder also thanked the health minister and his team for engaging with the MMA on Thursday to discuss key issues, including the staggered working hours, on-call allowances and other challenges faced by doctors in the public sector.

"We also look forward to engaging with the newly set-up task force as MMA has always espoused the importance and need for stakeholder engagement right from the initial stages of any policy planning."

Meanwhile, Hartal Doktor Kon-



Datuk Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira

trak, a group advocating for contract doctors' rights, also commended the government for shelving the initiative.

"This decision should serve as a lesson to the country's leadership and ministries to truly listen to voices from the grassroots.

"The grassroots are what strengthen the tall, blossoming trees. They are the foundation and the roots of towering trees."

The group reaffirmed its commitment to providing checks and balances for Health Ministry policies and highlighted unresolved issues such as the promised establishment of a Health Reform Commission.

"We will continue to advocate for the welfare and sustainability of our medical fraternity.

"At the same time, those who initially proposed this policy must be held accountable for their decisions," it added.

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MUKA SURAT : 9

RUANGAN : NATION

NST M19 NATION 26/1/2025 (AHAD)

'LOCATIONS IDENTIFIED'

Raids on illegal clinics run by foreigners to be intensified

KULIM: The Home Ministry will intensify raids on illegal clinics operated by foreigners posing as doctors, minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said.

These illegal clinics are now under close surveillance by the Immigration Department following recent raids on several premises operating without authorisation.

A special operation with the Health Ministry recently led to the arrests of 10 Bangladeshis.

"There will be more raids in the future, as a significant number of these illegal clinics have been detected in the Klang Valley and nearby areas.

"We have already identified their locations, and all of them are on the Immigration Department's radar," Saifuddin said after attending the ministry's Meet the People Programme at SK Karangan yesterday.

He said the issue arose when certain parties took advantage of

the government's initiative to promote medical tourism to attract foreign patients to Malaysia.

"To prevent such parties from exploiting this initiative, the Immigration Department will thoroughly scrutinise every application submitted under medical visas to ensure it is not abused.

"Due to the high demand, we see instances of fake clinics, fake doctors, and fraudulent medical certificates. However, our immigration system is robust and cannot be easily bypassed.

"This is why we have detected fake medical certificates, clinics, and doctors. I give my assurance to the public that the Immigration Department will carefully monitor this issue before approving any medical visa applications," he added.

On Friday, Immigration raided 10 premises in the Klang Valley suspected of operating illegally as clinics for the past year.