

Ministry urged to help pharmacists in limbo

PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry has been urged to resolve the status of 730 contract pharmacists whose contracts will expire next year.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo called on the ministry to immediately address the reserve status issue affecting the group from the July 2024 intake.

"The MMA strongly supports the call for the immediate reinstatement of the 'reserve candidate' status for the 730 affected pharmacists.

"We also urge the Health Ministry to expedite the permanent appointment process to ensure their contracts don't expire in 2026," he said in a statement yesterday.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said it is equally important for the ministry to provide clear and transparent communication on the matter.

He said the ministry should display that concrete steps are being taken to resolve the issue, including whether their contracts will be extended while awaiting permanent absorption.

"Such clarity is essential to safeguard the morale and well-being of these pharmacists and to uphold the stability of Malaysia's healthcare workforce," he added.



YOUR OPINION

Health Ministry should focus on its own problems

I WRITE as a doctor who has served 25 years in public service and another 25 as a private medical specialist. During that time, I was chairman of the Malaysian Medical Association's (MMA) Schomos, which represents housemen, medical officers and specialists, for one year in 1994. Several years later, I was elected president of the Association of Specialists in Private Medical Practice Malaysia (ASPMMPM).

During my time with the government, and even until recently, the World Health Organization regularly commended the Malaysian health service under the Health Ministry as one of the best in the world.

Having the most comprehensive network of healthcare centres, district hospitals and general hospitals, the Health Ministry was capable of handling all aspects of healthcare.

The sick, whether citizen or foreigner or immigrant, could walk into the corridors of our public healthcare system and receive amazingly good care for a token fee.

However, over the last decade, the situation has taken a turn for the worse. What is happening to the Health Ministry in this short span of time is worrying and so serious that something must be done before it is too late.

When I became a private medical practitioner in 2000, only about 10% to 20% of patients were covered by medical insurance, hence the vast majority of the population sought care from public hospitals. But all was well,



Over the last two decades, private hospitals have flourished and so has the private medical insurance industry. Currently, 80% of admissions in private hospitals are covered by insurance.

Could the rise of private medical centres have led to a decrease in demand for care in public hospitals, resulting in complacency by the government to further develop its healthcare infrastructure?

The Health Ministry is currently facing three main issues: brain drain at the top; brain drain at the bottom as trainees and medical officers are driven away to the private sector or other countries; and lack of funds, hence the lack of new infrastructure to support the growing population.

Rather than allowing the public to be distracted with hikes in medical insurance premiums

and the so-called rising cost of private medical care, the ministry must look after its own affairs and continue to develop centres of excellence like the National Heart Institute.

For a start, a moratorium on private hospitals is needed, as every new hospital will draw away dozens of much needed experienced specialists from the government sector.

Next, serious improvements in service conditions, better promotion prospects for specialists and more training opportunities for medical officers must be instituted to stop the outflow of specialists and young doctors from government service to the private sector or other countries.

Finally, the Health Ministry needs funds to build new hospitals and keep the old ones well equipped with the latest equipment, too.

The Health Ministry, Treasury

Department and our Parliamentarians should wake up to this reality of a sinking institution instead of choking private medical institutions with rules, regulations and laws.

Reducing insurance premiums or controlling the cost of private healthcare treatment through the Reset (Revamp, Enhance, Strengthen, Expand, Transform) strategy and diagnosis-related groups payment system are only temporary measures that allow the middle class to receive better care in private medical centres.

Let the existing private health centres flourish and the insurance companies with their capable actuarial consultants and economists work out the premiums and adjustments; the government must focus on providing good public healthcare.

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PENANG

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LANDING in Penang brought a sigh of relief for flight passenger Erni Wati from Jakarta.

The direct flight may have taken only a few hours, yet for Erni, it meant that the medical treatment she has been waiting for was finally within reach.

She was among Indonesia's growing stream of healthcare travellers.

The hour-and-a-half journey from Jakarta to Penang, covering a distance of over 1,500km, to seek medical care was worth the travel for the 52-year-old.

"In Jakarta, waiting time for a check-up could take months, so I decided Penang would be the destination for my treatment," she said.

Erni said she has been unwell for a long time, but specialists back home could not find the cause.

Friends who had sought care in Penang urged her to make the trip.

She said the services provided in Penang to healthcare travellers made the journey far more convenient.

"Here, they provide us accommodation and transport to and from the airport at an affordable price.

"It feels worth the money here," she said.

Her daughter, Fiona Aravinda, 22, travelled with her to provide care and hoped to see some of Penang's attractions and try the local food after her mother's check-up.

For cancer patient Desnita Putri, 27, the journey is now routine, having made more than 20 trips to Penang.

"It was not just tip-top treatment; the doctors here are highly

Penang medical tourism soars with direct flights

Airline's new Jakarta route a boon for Indonesian healthcare travellers



(From left) Fiona, Erni, Desnita and Ida at Penang International Airport.
— Photos: CHAN BOON KAI/The Star



(From right) A driver assisting Irwan and Melda as they arrive at the airport.

trained and educated," she said.

Travelling with her mother, Ida Wahyuni, Desnita said she usually found a bit of time to explore Penang after her sessions.

Businessman Irwan Samudera, 53, who came for his heart treatment accompanied by his wife Melda Koesuma, 49, said clear treatment plans mattered most to him.

"The doctors here explain everything step by step," he said.

He said the doctor took time to go through scans, costs and options, and he felt confident and not rushed.

The Indonesian travellers were part of the first group on TransNusa's inaugural Jakarta-Penang flight.

They were welcomed by state

tourism committee chairman Wong Hon Wai, Tourism Malaysia deputy director-general (Promotion II) Lee Thai Hung, TransNusa Group chief executive officer Datuk Bernard Francis and Indonesia's consul-general in Penang Wanton Seragih Sid.

Wong said the new route supported national plans to develop healthcare travel.

"Next year is not only Visit Malaysia 2026 but also Malaysia Year of Medical Tourism 2026.

"Indonesia is the most important healthcare travel market for Penang, making up nearly 90% of the state's healthcare travel revenue," he said.

Currently, there are several Jakarta-Penang direct flights available.

43,972 individu alami masalah mental

KUANTAN – Seramai 43,972 pesakit mental direkodkan dalam tempoh lima tahun bermula 2020 hingga tahun lalu di negeri ini.

Exco Kerja Raya, Pengangkutan dan Kesihatan negeri, Datuk Ir. Razali Kassim berkata, daripada jumlah itu, 3,076 merupakan kes baharu manakala 40,896 kes adalah ulangan.

Menurutnya, Kuantan merekodkan jumlah pesakit mental tertinggi dengan 20,138 pesakit terdiri daripada 1,214 kes baharu dan 18,924 kes ulangan, diikuti Temerloh (8,376 kes), Bentong (5,488 kes), Lipis (3,063 kes) dan Pekan (2,263 kes).

"Manakala Rompin (727 kes), Muadzam Shah (603 kes), Jerantut (804 kes), Bera (644 kes), Jengka dan Maran (684 kes), Raub (579 kes) dan Cameron Highlands (403 kes)," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian ketika menjawab soalan Hassanuddin Salim (**PAS-Kuala Semantan**) ketika Sidang DUN di sini pada Khamis.

Razali berkata, sehingga Mei tahun ini, seramai 34,727 individu disaring dan daripada jumlah itu, 541 daripadanya dirujuk untuk intervensi lanjut manakala 70 lain disahkan menghidap penyakit mental.

Jelas beliau, berdasarkan laporan

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) dan dapatan saringan, antara punca masalah kesihatan dan penyakit mental termasuk tekanan hidup dan ekonomi seperti peningkatan kos sara hidup, pengangguran serta hutang isi rumah.

"Masalah keluarga dan hubungan sosial seperti konflik rumah tangga, perceraian, kekurangan sokongan emosi turut menyumbang isu ini.

"Pada masa sama, penyakit mental turut disumbangkan masalah kesihatan kronik dan bencana, beban penyakit tidak berjangkit (NCD), kesan pasca Covid-19, banjir dan kehilangan harta benda," katanya.

Beliau turut memaklumkan faktor persekitaran dan sosial seperti stigma masyarakat serta keterasingan sosial

menyumbang kepada masalah tersebut.

"Kerajaan negeri melalui Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Pahang (JKNP) melaksanakan pelbagai inisiatif komprehensif bagi memperkukuh kesihatan mental rakyat termasuk promosi kesihatan.

"Pelaksanaan saringan awal melalui Inisiatif Saringan Kesihatan Kebangsaan (NHIS) dan MyMinda di fasiliti kesihatan primer turut dijalankan di samping program *outreach* ke sekolah, tempat kerja dan komuniti," ujarnya.



RAZALI KASSIM

Kilang kek kotor berbau najis tikus dan lipas diarahkan tutup

Premis dalam keadaan jijik diminta tidak beroperasi selama 14 hari

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Melaka: Sebuah kilang kek dekat Taman Angkasa Nuri, Batu Berendam di sini, diarah tutup serta-merta selama 14 hari, selepas didapati beroperasi dalam keadaan menjijikkan kerana diselimuti bau busuk najis tikus dan lipas.

Tahap kekotoran itu dikesan selepas kilang terbabit diperiksa dalam serbuan penguat kuasa Majlis Perbandaran Hang Tuah Jaya (MPHTJ) bersama Jabatan

Kesihatan Negeri Melaka (JKNM) pada Selasa.

Yang Dipertua MPHTJ, Datuk Sapiiah Haron, berkata pemeriksaan mendapati tahap kebersihan premis sangat tidak memuaskan dengan pelbagai kotoran dan najis haiwan perosak.

"Banyak najis tikus dan lipas ditemui dalam stor makanan. Dinding premis juga kotor selain saluran air yang rosak menyebabkan bau busuk.

"Atas faktor risiko keselamatan makanan, premis ini diarahkan tutup selama 14 hari mengikut Seksyen 11, Akta Makanan 1983," katanya di sini, semalam.

Pemilik kena 2 notis

Sapiiah berkata, arahan penutupan itu dikeluarkan Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah Melaka Tengah (PKDMT) selepas pemeriksaan bersepadu diketuai MPHTJ.

Pemilik kilang turut dikenakan dua notis mengikut Peratu-

ran 32(1)(b), Peraturan-Peraturan Kebersihan Makanan 2009 kerana gagal memastikan kawasan penyediaan makanan bersih, teratur dan bebas daripada risiko pencemaran.

Sapiiah berkata, dalam operasi sama, sebuah kilang roti berhampiriran pula dikenakan dua notis kerana kebersihan kurang memuaskan serta pengendali makanan yang tidak mengamalkan kebersihan diri.

"Ia adalah kesalahan di bawah Seksyen 11(1)(c) akta sama dan Peraturan 8(1)(a)," katanya.

Dalam operasi itu juga, sebuah kilang mi wantan dekat Taman Merdeka menerima tiga notis di bawah Peraturan 32(1)(b) kerana kawasan pengeluaran berisiko menyebabkan pencemaran.

"Arahan pembetulan dikeluarkan kepada ketiga-tiga pemilik premis selepas mereka memperoleh skor kebersihan antara 72 hingga 82 peratus," katanya.



Kilang kek di Taman Angkasa Nuri, Batu Berendam, Melaka, yang didapati berbau najis lipas dan tikus diserbu MPHTJ dan JKNM.

43,972 pesakit mental direkodkan di Pahang dalam tempoh lima tahun

Kuantan: Pahang merekodkan seramai 43,972 pesakit mental bagi kes baharu dan ulangan dalam tempoh lima tahun sepanjang 2020 hingga tahun lalu.

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Kerja Raya, Pengangkutan dan Kesihatan Pahang, Datuk Razali Kassim, berkata, daripada jumlah itu, seramai 40,896 pesakit mental bagi kes ulangan dan 3,076 pesakit pula kes baharu.

Katanya, berdasarkan laporan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) dan dapatan saringan, antara punca masalah kesihatan mental dan penyakit mental ialah tekanan hidup dan ekonomi iaitu kos sara hidup yang meningkat, pengangguran dan hutang isi rumah.

"Selain itu, masalah keluarga dan hubungan sosial iaitu konflik rumah tangga, perceraian, kekurangan sokongan emosi.

"Faktor lain ialah masalah kesihatan kronik dan bencanabeban penyakit tidak berjangkit (NCD), kesan pasca Covid-19, banjir dan kehilangan harta benda.

"Faktor persekitaran dan sosial iaitu stigma masyarakat dan keterasingan sosial," katanya ketika menjawab soalan Hassanuddin Salim (Pas-Kuala Semantan) pada Mesyuarat Ketiga Penggal Keempat Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) Pahang Ke-15 di Wisma Sri Pahang, di sini, semalam.

Pada mesyuarat itu, Hassanuddin ingin tahu jumlah pesakit mental dan

"Faktor lain ialah masalah kesihatan kronik dan bencanabeban penyakit tidak berjangkit (NCD), kesan pasca Covid-19, banjir dan kehilangan harta benda"

Razali

pendekatan yang dilaksanakan kerajaan untuk mengawal penyakit mental.

Razali berkata, kerajaan negeri melalui Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri (JKN) Pahang melaksanakan pelbagai inisiatif komprehensif bagi memperkukuh kesihatan mental rakyat.

Katanya, antara inisiatif

itu ialah pengukuhan saringan dan promosi kesihatan mental, pemantauan perkhidmatan di fasiliti kesihatan dan pengembangan Perkhidmatan Pusat Kesihatan Mental Komuniti (MENTARI).

"Selain itu, pendekatan psikososial berasaskan komuniti, peningkatan barisan hadapan dan kerjasama strategik antara agensi kerajaan, swasta dan pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO).

"Akses bantuan segera disediakan melalui talian HEAL 15555 selama 24 jam sebagai talian sokongan krisis yang memberi khidmat nasihat, intervensi awal dan rujukan profesional kepada individu yang memerlukan," katanya.



MENYUSU BADAN VS SUSU FORMULA

Apa Yang Terbaik Untuk Si Manja

IBU BAPA semestinya berasa buntu untuk memilih antara menyusui badan atau memberi susu formula. Khususnya, bagi mereka yang baru pertama kali menimang cahaya mata.

Setiap ibu bapa tentunya ingin memberikan yang terbaik untuk anak mereka, termasuk dalam hal pemakanan sejak lahir. Namun, keputusan ini tidak selalunya mudah kerana ia melibatkan pelbagai faktor seperti kesihatan ibu, gaya hidup, dan keperluan bayi itu sendiri. Oleh itu, penting untuk memahami kelebihan dan kekurangan kedua-dua kaedah penyusuan ini sebelum membuat pilihan yang sesuai.

Dari segi pemakanan, susu ibu dianggap sebagai sumber nutrisi terbaik untuk bayi. Ia mengandungi keseimbangan sempurna antara protein, lemak, karbohidrat, vitamin, dan mineral yang diperlukan untuk pertumbuhan dan perkembangan bayi. Selain itu, susu ibu juga mengandungi antibodi semula jadi yang dapat membantu bayi melawan jangkitan dan penyakit, terutama pada enam bulan pertama kehidupan. Menyusu badan juga memberi manfaat besar kepada ibu. Proses penyusuan membantu mengecutkan rahim selepas bersalin dan mengurangkan risiko ibu menghidap penyakit tertentu seperti kanser payudara dan kanser ovari.

Dari sudut emosi pula, penyusuan badan memainkan peranan penting dalam membina ikatan kasih sayang yang mendalam antara ibu dan bayi. Sentuhan kulit ke kulit semasa menyusui bukan sahaja memberikan keselesaan kepada bayi, malah turut membantu dalam perkembangan emosi dan psikologi mereka.

Walaupun begitu, penyusuan badan bukanlah pilihan yang mudah bagi semua ibu. Sesetengah ibu menghadapi cabaran seperti kekurangan susu, bayi tidak mahu menyusui, atau masalah kesihatan yang menghalang mereka daripada menyusukan anak secara eksklusif. Di sinilah susu formula menjadi alternatif yang sesuai dan praktikal. Susu formula yang terdapat di pasaran

hari ini diformulasikan dengan nutrisi penting seperti protein, zat besi, kalsium, dan vitamin bagi memastikan bayi tetap mendapat khasiat yang diperlukan untuk tumbesaran mereka.

Kelebihan susu formula termasuklah kemudahan bagi ahli keluarga lain untuk turut serta dalam penjagaan bayi, kerana penyusuan tidak hanya bergantung kepada ibu semata-mata. Ini memberi ruang kepada ibu untuk berehat dan menyesuaikan diri dengan tanggungjawab lain, terutama bagi ibu yang bekerja. Namun, penyediaan susu formula memerlukan perhatian yang rapi. Botol susu dan puting perlu dibersihkan dengan teliti bagi mengelakkan jangkitan, dan penyediaan susu mesti dilakukan mengikut sukatan yang betul. Tambahan pula, kos untuk membeli susu formula boleh menjadi agak tinggi dan mungkin membebankan sesetengah keluarga.

Jika dibandingkan, susu ibu adalah pilihan terbaik dan lebih disyorkan agar bayi diberikan susu ibu secara eksklusif. Terutama dengan kemudahan teknologi masa kini yang membolehkan ibu mengepam susu menggunakan alat pengepam khas. Namun, tidak semua ibu berpeluang melakukannya. Oleh itu, adalah penting untuk tidak menilai atau menyalahkan mana-mana pilihan. Yang paling penting ialah memastikan bayi mendapat nutrisi mencukupi dan ibu berada dalam keadaan fizikal serta emosi yang baik.

Kesimpulannya, sama ada memilih untuk menyusui badan atau memberi susu formula, setiap pilihan mempunyai kelebihan dan cabarannya yang tersendiri. Penyusuan badan memberikan kelebihan semula jadi tiada tandingan, namun susu formula juga memainkan peranan penting bagi membantu ibu bapa yang tidak dapat menyusukan anak sepenuhnya. Yang paling penting, keputusan ini harus dibuat berdasarkan situasi, kesihatan, dan kemampuan keluarga masing-masing tanpa tekanan daripada mana-mana pihak. Apa yang lebih utama ialah kasih sayang, perhatian, dan penjagaan rapi yang diberikan kepada si manja, kerana itulah yang benar-benar menentukan kesejahteraan dan kebahagiaan mereka sepanjang membesar.



Sultan Sharafuddin arriving for the investiture ceremony at Balai Rung Seri in Istana Alam Shah yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

Selangor Sultan's daughter heads honours list

KLANG: The Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah's daughter Tengku Zerafina headed the list of 98 recipients of state awards and honours conferred in conjunction with His Royal Highness' 80th birthday celebration yesterday.

Tengku Zerafina was awarded the *Darjah Kerabat Selangor Yang Dihormati*.

At the investiture ceremony held at the Balai Rung Seri, Istana Alam Shah, Sultan Sharafuddin also conferred the *Darjah Kebesaran Seri Paduka Mahkota Selangor*, which carries the title "Datuk Seri", to Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar and Sunway Group founder and chairman Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah Fook Ling.

The *Darjah Kebesaran Dato' Setia Sultan*

Sharafuddin Idris Shah, which carries the title "Datuk Setia", was awarded to Selangor Islamic Religious Council deputy chairman Tan Sri Mazlan Mansor, YTL Corporation Berhad executive director Datuk Mark Yeoh Seok Kah and Subang Jaya Medical Centre orthopaedic consultant surgeon Datuk Dr Anuar Onah.

Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil led the list of 16 recipients of the *Darjah Kebesaran Dato' Paduka Mahkota Selangor*, which carries the title "Datuk" for men and "Datin Paduka" for women.

Among the other recipients of the same award were Selangor state financial officer Datuk Dr Haniff Zainal Abidin, state Rural Development, Unity and Consumer Affairs

Committee chairman Datuk Rizam Ismail, Road Transport Department Director-General Datuk Aedy Fadly Ramli, Universiti Putra Malaysia Vice-Chancellor Datuk Prof Dr Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah and Selangor Education Department director Dr Jafri Abu.

Others honoured with the award were Federal Court Judge Datuk Azizah Omar, Court of Appeal Judge Ong Chee Kwan, Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) Defence Cyber and Electromagnetic Division Director-General Rear Admiral Fadhil Abdul Rahman, Royal Malaysian Navy Development Planning and Strategy Assistant Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Ahmad Shafirudin Abu Bakar and Royal Malaysian Air Force Personnel Services Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Brig-Jen Hamdan Ahmad. – Bernama