

HOME / **MALAYSIA**

Employers' group denies stakeholders agreed to hiking private medical fees by almost 300pc

Published 2 hours ago on 29 August 2018

By A. Ruban



MEF executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan says the proposal to allow doctors in private clinics and general practitioners' to hike their charge is not agreed upon by several groups during a recent town hall meeting at the Health Ministry. — Picture by Firdaus Latif

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 29 — Given the current state of the country's economic status, increasing prices of goods and services — especially medical consultation charges in private clinics — will only trouble consumers and employers, workers and consumer groups have asserted.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the proposal to allow doctors in private clinics and general practitioners' to hike their charge to between RM35 and RM125 — up from RM10 and RM35 — was, in fact, not agreed upon by several groups during a recent town hall meeting at the Health Ministry.

"It is a misstatement to say that we had all agreed for doctors' consultation fees in private clinics to be increased especially not this time when the economy is not very good," he told *Malay Mail*.

"There was no consensus reached at the end of the meeting and we did not agree for the fees to be hiked by almost 300 per cent," he claimed, adding that MEF was among those invited to the session titled "Stakeholders Consultation on the Proposed Revision of General Practitioners' Charges".

Deputy director-general of health (medical) Datuk Dr Azman Abu Bakar was quoted saying the revision of charges is necessary as the last time it was done was in 2006.

Dr Azman said the paper on the proposal will be submitted to Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad next, and indicated that the implementation of the new rates could take place as early as January.

Shamsuddin said employers would also be affected if the increase in medical fees was agreed and implemented at the beginning of next year.

He pointed an employer paid about seven per cent per worker's salary each month for medical claims.

"That amounts to about RM16.8 billion a year. Imagine if the fee is hiked up to more than RM100 how are employers going to cushion this?" he said.

Shamsuddin also pointed that the proposal was equivalent to the charges of a specialist at a private hospital.

"We cannot accept this and we hope it won't be implemented," he said.

Meanwhile, Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) president Mohamed Idris echoed the sentiment, pointing out that consumers were already burdened with the overall cost of living.

"Any drastic increase in medical fees will deter consumers from seeking medical treatment which may then lead to more severe health consequences," he said in a statement.

Should the Health Ministry decide to go with the hike, Mohamed said the increase must be justified and cannot be higher than the inflation rate.

Citing a news report, he said Malaysia's healthcare inflation was 11.5 per cent in 2016 and rose to 12.7 per cent in 2017, which he pointed was higher than the average of 10.7 per cent in the Asian region.

He also suggested that it should be made mandatory for doctors to provide itemised billing that separates the consultation fee and medicines cost.

"There should not be any mark up on the price of medicines since doctors' fee comes from consultation.