

Private clinics, hospitals to charge more after minister gazettes new fee structure, says report
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An amendment to the 13th Schedule of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 is set to push medical fees in private clinics and hospitals by several fold, said a report.

News portal Malaysiakini said the amendment was gazetted on December 16 last year without much fanfare, as even members of parliament were not informed.

But the report said the health minister is legally not required to consult MPs, as spelt out by Section 106(2) of the same act, giving the minister powers to amend prices in the schedule after consulting the health director-general.

The increase in medical costs involved fees charged by doctors, from general practitioners to specialists and surgeons.

The new charge for a clinic consultation is now between RM30 and RM125, as opposed to RM10-RM35 previously.

A visit to a specialist may now cost up to RM235 for consultation alone, double the previous cap of RM125, while fees for medical procedures will be increased between 14-18%.

Several MPs with medical backgrounds have spoken out against the increase and the manner in which it was rushed through.

"As a former medical practitioner, I feel this drastic price increase is not warranted... the rakyat are already suffering from all kinds of price hikes," PKR's Wangsa Maju MP, Dr Tan Kee Kwong told Malaysiakini.

Sungai Siput MP Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj, however, said that while stiff competition among general practitioners would mean the fee hike would not be followed, the same would not be the case with medical procedures.

Dr Jeyakumar also criticised the government's investment in private healthcare, saying it was a serious conflict of interest as the government should be focusing on improving public hospitals.
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