

MEDIA STATEMENT **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

IJN RESPONDS TO CONCERNS RAISED IN VIRAL SOCIAL MEDIA LETTER

KUALA LUMPUR, 21 August 2024 – Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) acknowledges the concerns raised in a letter by S. Balagurunathan that has recently gained significant attention on social media, particularly regarding the accessibility of our services. We greatly value feedback from the community and are committed to transparency. However, it is important to clarify that the policies and practices mentioned in the letter are not IJN's independent decisions, but are in line with government-set guidelines and regulations.

IJN is a corporatized entity fully owned by the government through the Ministry of Finance Incorporated. While we operate under the framework of the Malaysian Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998, our primary mission remains the provision of exceptional care to all Malaysians, regardless of their financial status or background. In fact, 75% of our current workload comprises patients from the government sector, including civil servants, pensioners, and their dependents.

As part of its corporatisation objective, IJN will collaborate with Ministry of Health (MOH) hospitals to serve as a referral centre for the nation's cardiology and cardiothoracic cases. Patients referred to IJN from public hospitals will only be discharged once they are stable, following a monitoring period of 6 to 12 months to ensure their recovery is on track. This process is guided by the policies set by the Public Services Department (JPA) and the Ministry of Health, not IJN's independent policy.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Health emphasized the importance of discharging patients back to MOH hospitals for follow-up care. This is intended to ensure that IJN can continue to accept and treat new critical and complex cases promptly. By following this government policy, IJN supports the broader strategy of optimising resource allocation across the healthcare system, ensuring that every patient receives the necessary care within a reasonable time frame. Additionally, this approach minimizes the need for patients, particularly those living outside the Klang Valley, to travel far for follow-up appointments and medication.

IJN is also proud to contribute to developing cardiology and cardiothoracic expertise in Malaysia. Many medical professionals working in MOH hospitals nationwide have received training at IJN, and we remain committed to supporting their ongoing professional development through clinical courses and residencies.

IJN's commitment to providing high-quality care is unwavering. We will continue to work diligently to maintain the trust and confidence of our patients and the broader community while adhering to government policies.

Patients requiring further information pertaining to their discharge may write to us at heart2heart@ijn.com.my

**This release is issued by the
Corporate Communication Department of Institut Jantung Negara**

Original letter:

IJN out of reach ,only for the rich
Please listen to our grievances.

The ownership and operational status of the National Heart Institute (IJN) have raised significant concerns among Malaysians, particularly with respect to its accessibility to lower-income groups and pensioners. IJN has long been recognized as a world-class provider of specialist cardiac treatment and care, a status that was achieved through substantial investment and support from Malaysian taxpayers. However, recent developments suggest a troubling shift in the institute's accessibility and operational policies, which demand urgent clarification and redress.

Ownership and Accountability

IJN is fully owned by the Ministry of Finance Malaysia, reflecting its status as a public institution established with the goal of providing essential healthcare services to all Malaysians, regardless of their financial status. The hospital was built and developed using funds contributed by Malaysian taxpayers, thereby making it a public asset that should be operated in the public interest.

Despite this clear public ownership, recent reports indicate that IJN is now functioning with a level of autonomy that raises serious questions about government oversight. The hospital's current operations, which resemble those of a private healthcare facility, seem to prioritize profitability over the public good. This is particularly alarming under the Madani government's tenure, which has emphasized policies of fairness, inclusivity, and care for all Malaysians.

Accessibility and Social Equity.

The shift in IJN's operational policies is particularly disheartening for the elderly, pensioners, and low-income Malaysians who have historically relied on IJN for affordable, high-quality cardiac care. Reports of these groups being effectively shut out from accessing IJN's services due to high costs contradict the foundational principles upon which the hospital was established. This approach not only undermines the social contract between the government and its citizens but also exacerbates health inequalities in Malaysia.

A Personal Motivation to Speak Out

The motivation and compelling reason for me to write this statement is the injustice faced by a close friend of mine, a Tokoh Guru who dedicated his entire working life to serving the nation as a teacher. After years of faithfully following up on his cardiac treatment at IJN, he was suddenly transferred out of the hospital, with cost-cutting cited as the primary reason. This is a man who devoted his life to educating the future generations of Malaysia, with the expectation that the government would, in turn, look after him in his old age. Yet, when he needed the state's support the most, he was effectively shut out of the very institution that had been caring for him.

My friend's story is not unique. There are many silent sufferers of this injustice—pensioners and low-income individuals who have been denied access to the care they need because of policies that prioritize profits over people. It is for them, and for the countless others who may be facing

similar challenges, that I feel compelled to raise this issue. It is my intent to create public discourse and to voice, collectively, to the government the urgent need to review and rectify this situation.

Government's Role and Responsibility

The rationale provided for this shift—namely, cost-cutting and the drive to make IJN profitable—fails to recognize the broader social responsibilities of a public healthcare institution. The Madani government must answer why a facility built with public funds is now operating in a manner that limits access for the very people it was designed to serve. Ensuring that IJN remains accessible to all, particularly the most vulnerable, is not just a matter of policy but of moral responsibility.

Call to Action

The current situation at IJN necessitates immediate government intervention. The Madani government must reaffirm its commitment to equitable healthcare by ensuring that IJN remains accessible to all Malaysians, regardless of their financial status. This includes reviewing and potentially reversing policies that have made IJN unaffordable for low-income groups and pensioners. Furthermore, transparency regarding the ownership and operational decisions at IJN is essential to restoring public trust.

In conclusion, the recent shift in IJN's operations under the Madani government is a disturbing development that must be addressed. The government has a duty to ensure that IJN, a public asset funded by taxpayers, operates in the best interests of all Malaysians. It is imperative that IJN return to its mission of providing world-class cardiac care that is accessible to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. The voices of those who are suffering in silence must be heard, and their plight must be addressed with urgency and compassion.

S.Balagurunathan.
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Ampang, Selangor
19.8.2024