

## Budget 2025: Healthcare stakeholders hope for solution to new on-call rates

15-10- 2024 01:25 PM



*Pix for visual purposes - BERNAMApix*

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Healthcare stakeholders are hopeful that the 2025 Budget will address some of the sector's ongoing challenges by focusing on new on-call rates, shortage of experts, and continuing efforts to increase funding allocations.

They want the issue to be addressed promptly by the MADANI government towards improving and maintaining the sustainability of the national health care system.

A spokesperson for Kumpulan Hartal Doktor Kontrak (HDK), a group representing contract doctors, Dr Muhammad Yassin said the demand for a revised on-call duty allowance is crucial, as it directly affects the welfare of healthcare workers.

He said the issue has also persisted for a long time.

HDK's push for a new allowance rate is well-founded, especially considering that the current rates no longer align with rising living costs, he said, adding that the last review was in 2012.

“Since then, there have been no adjustments, despite the growing responsibilities and pressures faced by medical professionals. This need for change is underscored by the recent salary adjustments for civil servants announced in August.

“This issue has persisted for a long time and needs to be resolved. We want to avoid doctors migrating to the private sector, which could pose a risk to the public healthcare system.

“That’s why we are speaking out, to ensure that healthcare workers are fairly compensated for their hard work. We want to see the public healthcare system remain strong and capable of meeting the people’s needs,” he told Bernama.

Dr Muhammad said the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is also prioritising the demand to increase on-call duty allowances, recommending that the rate be raised to RM25 per hour for medical officers and RM30 per hour for specialists.

He said healthcare spending should be viewed as an essential investment” for the country’s future.

“Therefore, the government should also address the growing number of healthcare workers, which is currently not keeping pace with the doctor-to-patient ratio. This imbalance needs urgent attention,” he said.

Additionally, he said, more funding is needed to upgrade outdated equipment and public health facilities, especially in Sabah and Sarawak, to prevent the widening health gap between the two states and the rest of the country.

The provision of special allowances for healthcare workers in rural areas should also be prioritised, he added.

In dealing with the shortage of grade UD56 specialists, MMA President Datuk Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira hopes for more Special Appointments for Incumbents (KUP) at Special Grade C in the 2025 Budget, noting that the last such appointments were made in 2012.

“About 100 senior doctors achieved UD56 status in 2017 and since then, are stuck at the scale... The last promotion exercise was made in 2012, when several special KUP C posts were created, allowing many doctors to advance to Special Grade C.

“MMA also emphasises the need for overall allocation in the field of health to at least reach five per cent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP),“ he said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS) president Prof Amrahi Buang emphasised the urgent need for increased public-private partnership efforts to enhance healthcare service delivery nationwide.

He highlighted the government’s role in providing financial support for the pilot project Ubat@Komuniti in Penang and advocated for its expansion throughout the state and accelerated expansion to Sabah, Sarawak, and other regions yearly.

“This will help decongest outpatient pharmacies by ensuring a steady supply of long-term medications for patients,” he stated.

Additionally, he urged the government to allocate more resources to the primary care sector, focusing on preventive and promotive health measures by improving health literacy among people, especially regarding the use of medicines.

The Budget 2025 themed ‘MADANI Economy, Prosperous Nation, Well-being of the People’ will be tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Oct 18 in Parliament.