

# On-Call Allowance Not About ‘Doctors Versus MPs’: MMA

By CodeBlue | 29 September 2025

MMA says the on-call allowance issue shouldn't be framed as “doctors versus MPs”, after Parliament Speaker Johari Abdul compared doctors' pay to MPs. MMA demands raising on-call allowance from RM9.16 to RM25/hour, adding that there are many principled MPs.



*Malaysian Medical Association president Dr R. Arasu speaks at a doctors' rally in Putrajaya on May 6, 2025, to protest the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry's (KPDN) jurisdiction over mandatory drug price display under the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Act 2011 (Act 723). Photo by Sam Tham for CodeBlue.*

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29** — Failure to raise doctors' on-call allowance amid rising workloads in the government health service directly affects patient safety and quality of care, said the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

The country's largest doctors' group highlighted recent remarks by Dewan Rakyat Speaker Johari Abdul in an interview with *BFM*, during which he rejected a [proposal by CodeBlue](#) to slash MPs'

and senators' allowances and pensions by 50 per cent to fund a 25 per cent increase in medical officers' on-call allowance (ETAP) rates.

“This should not be framed as ‘doctors versus MPs’. We recognise that there are many hardworking and principled Members of Parliament who have consistently stood up for health care and the welfare of the rakyat, and we

value their continued support,” MMA president Dr R. Arasu said in a statement yesterday.

“For doctors, the on-call allowance is not a privilege. It is recognition of work that often stretches beyond 24 hours without proper rest, handling life-and-death decisions continuously.

“Yet today, the allowance, when broken down, amounts to just RM9.16 an hour — a rate that has not been revised for more than 10 years, despite the growing demands and responsibilities carried by our doctors.”

In his *BFM* interview aired last Friday, [Johari compared](#) the wages of doctors to MPs, saying that doctors get to keep “100 per cent” of their salary, unlike elected representatives whose RM25,000 monthly allowance, he said, is insufficient due to obligatory donations to constituents.

The remarks by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and former Sungai Petani MP from PKR incensed doctors and members of the general public alike.

[Doctors and other health care workers](#) pointed out that they often cover travel expenses and other basic necessities for impoverished patients, besides using their own money to meet facility needs in public health clinics or hospitals due to limited budgets. Ordinary Malaysians wrote about witnessing how doctors worked 36 consecutive hours during on-call duty.

MMA called for a debate on the on-call allowance issue in Parliament.

“Taking care of those who care for the nation’s health must be a priority, and it is the fiduciary duty of Members of Parliament to ensure that health care issues are given the serious attention they deserve in parliamentary debates,” said Dr Arasu.

“The public deserves doctors who are competent, fairly supported, and given clear pathways for career growth. Pay, workload balance, and career development together form the foundation to reduce attrition and sustain our health system.”

MMA also proposed “constructive dialogue” with Johari and parliamentarians.

Umno Youth chief Dr Akmal Saleh and many other doctors told the House Speaker to join an on-call shift in a government hospital to understand the reality of a doctor’s life.

Johari has yet to respond to the virulent criticism against him or apologise for comparing doctors to politicians. Aside from Dr Akmal, who is Merlimau state assemblyman, no MP has waded into the debate.

In a [post on X](#), Dr Arasu said raising medical officers’ on-call claims for weekend calls from RM9.16 to RM25 per hour would “help sustain safe, quality care for all.”

According to MOH, a 25 per cent increment, or an additional RM55 per shift from the current rate of RM220, was estimated to cost RM75 million to RM80 million a year. *CodeBlue* estimated that a 50 per cent cut to parliamentarians’ allowances and pensions could generate RM83.5 million annually.

On-call claims for medical and dental officers currently cost the MOH about RM288 million a year, [according to Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad](#).

MMA’s demand for a 173 per cent on-call allowance increase to RM600 per shift (RM25 per hour) means an additional RM498 million, raising the cost of ETAP to RM786 million annually.