

‘On-call pay for doctors must be fair’

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2025-09-29 08:00 AM



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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has urged lawmakers to urgently debate long-delayed reforms to doctors’ on-call allowances, warning that stagnant rates threaten patient safety and the healthcare workforce.

MMA president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo said the issue should not be reduced to a “doctors versus MPs” narrative following Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul’s comments on proposals to reallocate a portion of MPs’ allowances for doctors’

overnight duty pay, known as Elaun Tugas Atas Panggilan (ETAP).

“We recognise there are many hardworking MPs who consistently stand up for healthcare and the welfare of the rakyat and we value their continued support,” he said in a statement.

The MMA stressed that on-call pay is not a perk but recognition for gruelling shifts that can stretch beyond 24 hours without proper rest, handling life-and-death decisions. Current rates work out to just RM9.16 per

hour and have not changed in over a decade despite heavier workloads.

“When doctors are fatigued and demoralised, the impact is direct – patients’ safety and quality of care suffer.

“Taking care of those who care for the nation’s health must be a priority and it is Parliament’s duty to give healthcare issues the serious attention they deserve,” Thirunavukarasu said.

The association called for fair pay, manageable workloads and clear career

pathways to stem attrition and safeguard the system’s sustainability.

“We urge MPs to debate this issue with urgency, not only for doctors’ welfare but for patients’ safety and the long-term resilience of healthcare,” he said, adding that the MMA is ready for constructive dialogue with the Speaker and MPs.

Johari, had also, rejected a proposal to cut MPs’ allowances by half, saying backbenchers earn about RM25,000 a month – “not enough actually” – while ministers get RM40,000, much of which goes to constituency work and community aid.