



## MMA hits out at ‘inefficient, insensitive’ govt for rejecting higher on-call payment

It describes the health ministry’s move to maintain the RM9.16 hourly rate as an insult, noting that there are waiters who get paid a better rate.

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The Malaysian Medical Association had been pushing for a raise in the on-call rates for doctors as it had been the same for a decade. (Reuters pic)

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has lashed out at the government for shooting down its request for an increase in on-call allowances for doctors.

MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said the government’s “outright rejection” of the proposal, to increase public healthcare doctors’ on-call allowance from the current hourly rate of RM9.16 to RM25, was “utterly disappointing” and “insensitive”.

“The ministry’s response stating that RM9.16 per hour is an ‘appropriate’ rate is an insult to not only doctors but all healthcare workers in the country.

“Is the government even aware that there are waiters in the country who get paid a higher hourly rate than its doctors?” she asked in a statement.

Yesterday, FMT reported that the government had shot down a request from MMA for an increase in on-call allowances for doctors on grounds that it is bound by a 2019 service circular by the finance ministry and public services department (JPA).

In a written reply to MMA two weeks ago, the health ministry said the position of other services in relation to allowances and the financial position of the country must also be considered.

In the letter sighted by FMT, the government said it is of the view that the current on-call allowances are appropriate as doctors enjoy many other allowances.

This includes critical service allowance (RM750 monthly), specialist incentive (from RM2,200 to RM3,100 monthly) and locum allowance to work off-duty hours (RM80 per hour).

“Others are elective surgery allowance (RM200 for specialists and RM80 for medical officers per hour) and for hospital administration (RM1,520 to RM2,480 per month, according to grades),” it read.

Azizan described the government as “inefficient”, lamenting that it took the health ministry 10 months to respond following a town hall session during which MMA’s request for the revision in on-call rates was made.

She also said the information provided by the government on these issues had created a false public perception as not all public healthcare doctors are entitled to the allowances mentioned.

“Entitlement to the various allowances depends on the doctor’s position and rank.

“Most doctors do not receive the allowances stated in the government’s reply.

“If indeed the decision (to reject the increase in on-call allowance) was made without referring to accurate information, we wish to request the government to reevaluate and reconsider its decision concerning the proposed on-call rate increase,” she said.