

## MMA raises concerns over on-call allowance rejection

By **AMALIA AZMI** - November 4, 2023 @ 4:34pm



*MMA president, Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz, criticised the ministry's outright dismissal of the proposal to raise public healthcare doctors' weekend on-call allowance from the current hourly rate of RM9.16 to RM25, deeming it as both insensitive and inefficient. FILE PIC*

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has expressed disappointment with the recent decision by the Health Ministry to reject the proposal for an increase in on-call allowances for public healthcare doctors.

MMA president, Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz, criticised the ministry's outright dismissal of the proposal to raise public healthcare doctors' weekend on-call allowance from the current hourly rate of RM9.16 to RM25, deeming it as both insensitive and inefficient.

"The ministry's response stating that RM9.16 is an 'appropriate' rate is an insult to not only doctors but all healthcare workers in the country," remarked Dr Azizan in a statement today.

Contrary to the government's explanation, Dr Azizan clarified that the amount is paid for 24 hours of work and would not have been disbursed had the doctor not worked. Therefore, the RM220 allowance should be divided by 24 hours.

She also pointed out that the criteria for permanent selection are overly general and lack a transparent ranking system for the proper assessment and evaluation of doctors.

Furthermore, the association highlighted inaccuracies in the government's response that have led to false public perceptions.

Dr Azizan clarified that not all public healthcare doctors are entitled to the mentioned allowances, with eligibility depending on the doctor's position and rank.

"Most doctors do not receive such allowances, as stated in the government's reply," she said.

MMA raised concerns that the decision might have been made without accurate information, and called on the government to reevaluate and reconsider its stance on the proposed on-call rate increase.

Dr Azizan recalled an earlier incident this year where the government's explanation of on-call allowance published in the media was factually incorrect and had not been retracted or apologised for.

The association also reminded the government of the alarming attrition rates within public healthcare, citing a 1,131 per cent increase in contract medical officer resignations from 2017 to 2022.

Additionally, 890 specialists resigned from government service between 2018 and 2022, averaging more than 4 specialists leaving per week during that period.

"The frustration among doctors in public healthcare is a matter not to be taken lightly. There is concern that, on top of the burnout many doctors are experiencing coupled with the low wages earned, issues like the stagnant on-call allowance may spark further frustration and brain drain.

"Doctors in public healthcare have not seen an increase in on-call allowance for over a decade. Taking into consideration inflation, the on-call allowance rate should be reviewed every five years." she added.