

Ministry must improve livelihood of govt healthcare workers or risk losing them

By **Hana Naz Harun** - November 5, 2023 @ 5:36pm



Malaysia's public healthcare sector risks losing even more professionals if the Health Ministry refuses to take immediate measures to improve their livelihoods. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's public healthcare sector risks losing even more professionals if the Health Ministry refuses to take immediate measures to improve their livelihoods.

Government healthcare workers, upset with the ministry's decision to reject the proposal to increase on-call allowances, told the New Straits Times that they were overworked and severely underpaid.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one medical officer (MO) said they were bogged down with work, going as far as describing the workload as "crazy".

"I've never experienced an increase in allowances ever since I was a houseman in 2016.

"There is a valid need to revise allowances, because of the current situation, taking into account our workload and also the economic situation.

"There has to be revision and progress. We have even seen a change in government several times, yet we're still using the same pay scheme from many years ago."

The Malaysian Medical Association on Friday expressed its disappointment with the recent decision by the Health Ministry to reject the proposal for an increase in on-call allowances for government doctors.

Its president, Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz, had criticised the ministry's outright dismissal of the proposal to raise public healthcare doctors' weekend on-call allowance, deeming it as both insensitive and inefficient.

She had said the ministry's response stating that RM9.16 was an "appropriate" rate was an insult not only to doctors, but all healthcare workers in the country.

Meanwhile, another senior MO was already planning an "exit strategy", and would immediately quit the public service after completing their specialist exam.

Stressing that healthcare workers were unmotivated, they said: "They just want to punch in and out and do the minimum work possible. And if they can get away with doing less, even better.

"For many, it's just put your head down, don't make noise, and just do your job, while for others, 'it's if I don't do this, nothing's going to happen to me, I still get paid'."

They claimed that it was a "huge systemic issue", adding that the Health Ministry needed better accountability at all levels.

"Better pay would definitely be good, (but) people also want more than just money. They want better work-life balance, and a less toxic environment to work in."