

New MMA Chief Wants ‘Appropriate’ On-Call Allowance Raise For Doctors

By CodeBlue | 9 September 2024

MMA’s new president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira calls for an “appropriate” on-call allowance raise for doctors in Budget 2025 to recognise their sacrifices, besides asking for a solution to permanent posts to retain junior doctors in the public service.



The Malaysian Medical Association's office bearers for the 2024-2025 term. From left: Dr Parmjit Singh Kuldip Singh (Private Practitioners Section (PPS) Chairman), Dr Timothy Cheng Tsin Jien (Section Concerning House Officers Medical Officers and Specialists (SCHOMOS) Chairman), Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo (President-Elect), Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz (Immediate Past President), Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira (President), Dr Vasu Pillai Letchumanan (Honorary General Secretary), and Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan and Dr Sivabala Selvaratnam (both Honorary Deputy Secretaries). Photo courtesy of MMA at MMA's annual banquet in Kuching, Sarawak, on September 7, 2024.

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 — Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira has told Putrajaya to allocate an “appropriate” increase of government doctors’ on-call allowance in Budget 2025.

Dr Kalwinder, who replaced Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz as head of the doctors’ group after the end of the latter’s term, pointed out that doctors often work 24 hours’ on-call duty.

“We note that the government has said there will be changes in the on-call allowances. However, we hope that the increase in quantum will be appropriate and apt for the responsibilities the doctors undertake,” Dr Kalwinder said in his inaugural speech at MMA’s annual banquet in Kuching, Sarawak, last Saturday.

“This duty has never been a choice, but a necessity in providing health care to patients and as such, entails many sacrifices by doctors who have to be in hospitals during weekends, public holidays and also on family occasions. They should be appropriately acknowledged.”

The new MMA president, however, did not specify an “appropriate” on-call allowance rate.

Medical officers are only paid RM220 for weekend on-call duty, amounting to just RM9.16 per hour for 24 hours’ work.

MMA previously proposed an on-call allowance rate of RM25 per hour that would equate to RM600 for an on-call shift, three times the current RM200 amount for weekdays.

For the upcoming Budget 2025 that is due to be scheduled in October, Dr Kalwinder called for an increase in the health budget in terms of percentage of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP).

Dr Kalwinder said his focus would be on advocating for the welfare of doctors in the public health service, including their right to job security, specialist training options and opportunities, a healthy work environment, work life balance, mental wellbeing, as well as salaries and on-call allowances.

“We hope for more meaningful engagement with the government on the setting up of a health care reform commission as it will have an effect on the long term future of health care and health care workers in the country. MMA, with its more than 17,000 members, will definitely like to give its views,” he said.

The new MMA president also stressed the importance of retaining junior doctors in the public health service.

“Hopefully, the conundrum of contract doctors and permanent posts will be settled soon, while opportunities for postgraduate training locally need to be enhanced, with the young doctors being given the choice to choose the pathway which is suitable for them,” Dr Kalwinder said.

“This has to be a win-win situation as we cannot afford to continually lose doctors to resignations and to brain drain overseas, as has been the case in the last few years.”

As for issues affecting doctors in the private sector, Dr Kalwinder called for the long overdue harmonisation of the private general practitioners’ (GP) fee schedule with their counterparts in private hospitals.

Private GPs' consultation fees are set at RM10 to RM35 under Schedule 7 of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act (PHFSA) 1998, compared to GPs in private hospitals, whose fees are set at RM30 to RM125 under Schedule 13 of the PHFSA.

The new MMA president also raised issues faced by private specialists with insurers and third-party administrators (TPAs).

MMA's office bearers for the 2024-2025 term are:

- **President:** Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira
- **President-Elect:** Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo
- **Immediate Past President:** Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz
- **Honorary General Secretary:** Dr Vasu Pillai Letchumanan
- **Honorary General Treasurer:** Dr Arvindran Alaga
- **Honorary Deputy Secretaries:** Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan and Dr Sivabala Selvaratnam
- **Private Practitioners Section (PPS) Chairman:** Dr Parmjit Singh Kuldip Singh
- **Section Concerning House Officers Medical Officers and Specialists (Schomos) Chairman:** Dr Timothy Cheng Tsin Jien