

Govt rejects doctors' request for higher on-call payment



The government has shot down a request from the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) for an increase in on-call allowances for doctors, saying 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.

According to the ministry, it had submitted many applications and appeals to JPA in 2020 and last year but they were all rejected.

“At the moment, the government is of the view that the current on-call allowances are appropriate as doctors enjoy many other allowances. They are 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),” the ministry said in the letter sighted by FMT.

The MMA has been pushing for a raise as the on-call rates have been stagnant for a decade.

At a town hall meeting with health minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa last February, MMA had proposed a 178% increase in doctors' weekend on-call claims to RM25 an hour from the current rate which it claimed worked out to an hourly rate of RM9.16.

However, the ministry disputed the rate stated, saying dividing the daily on-call allowance of RM220 (the rate for public holidays and weekends) by 24 hours was not accurate.

Doctors in public healthcare noted that their counterparts in Singapore are paid SG\$60 an hour for on-call duty.

On another matter, the health ministry also rejected an appeal by government doctors to take into consideration the number of years they had served as contract doctors to calculate their retirement benefits including pension.

It said contract doctors were entitled for a gratuity payment each time they completed their contracts or were appointed as permanent officers.

“Their years of contract service is also taken into account when they are considered for time-based promotions,” it added. – FMT