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Package-Reactions (Health)

MEDICAL STAFF GRATEFUL TO GOV'T FOR THE MONTHLY CRITICAL ALLOWANCE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 21 (Bernama) -- Deputy Director-General of Health Datuk Dr Ismail Merican has thanked the government for the monthly critical allowance of RM400 for doctors and RM200 for other medical staff to help them in their daily fight to contain the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

He said the hospital staff, including doctors, who handled SARS cases were only doing their duties and did not expect to be rewarded for their efforts.

"The critical allowance announced by the government is really unexpected...we are only discharging our duties as health workers. Whatever it is, money is not a major concern. To us, what is important is the government's recognition of our contribution," he said when met today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the monthly allowance, backdated from April 1 this year and to be paid until the SARS epidemic is wiped out, when he unveiled a strategic economic package worth RM7.3 billion to bolster the national economy.

Dr Ismail said the hospital staff who handled SARS cases were certainly taking a very high risk because of the highly contagious nature of the disease.

On the RM100 million allocation announced by Dr Mahathir for public hygiene, he said it was important because most of the diseases were the result of unclean environment.

"Contagious diseases are usually present in developing countries and very seldom in developed countries because the people in developed countries care about personal hygiene," he said.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Medical Association's (MMA) President Datuk Dr N Athimulam said that the critical allowance would be an added incentive to the doctors and other medical staff and it would definitely boost the spirit as well as motivation to continue their battle against SARS.

"The MMA is grateful to our Prime Minister for the due consideration given to medical staff who have been very dedicated, diligent and working hard to fight and prevent SARS in our country," he said in a statement.

-- BERNAMA

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