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Higher SARS allowance for medical staff

KEPALA BATAS, Fri. - All doctors and medical workers who treated Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) patients will receive an increased critical allowance of between RM500 and RM1,000 per month in two weeks.

The pay will be backdated to March 16.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said 9,368 medical personnel stood to gain from the RM5.5 million allocated from the RM7.3 billion stimulus package announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said support staff would receive an increased allowance of RM500 from the previous RM200, while doctors and specialists would get RM1,000 from the previous RM400.

Explaining the rationale behind the increase in the critical allowances, Chua said "not a single one of the doctors and medical workers threatened to resign or refused to work in the designated wards, although their lives were in danger," he said after visiting Kepala Batas Hospital today.

Those entitled had worked in SARS isolation wards in the 21 designated hospitals, laboratories, entry points (airports and ports), the Malaysia-Singapore Second Link and Causeway, SARS operation rooms in the ministry and health officers in the States who helped track down people who came in contact with probable SARS victims.