

Health workers go on with more aid

'We are thankful for the one-off RM500 payment to medical frontliners'

IPOH: The Perlindungan Ekonomi dan Rakyat Malaysia Assistance Package (Permai) is a morale booster for medical frontliners working to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

All of the frontliners who were met here said the assistance package that was announced by the government has lifted the spirits of the frontliners fighting to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Health inspector Sekri Li, 36, said every little bit counts in the country's fight against the pandemic.

"The additional allocations will definitely help out as we try to break the Covid-19 chain again during MCO 2.0.

"The frontliners are exhausted but we keep fighting on," he added.

A 36-year-old nurse, who wished to remain anonymous, said the frontliners are thankful to the government for the one-off RM500 payment to all medical frontliners.

"Most of us have been occupied with the pandemic and have not had a good break since last year, with many needed to work overtime.

"Our mood has been lifted with



Every bit counts: (From left) Sekri, Dr Suhaida, Mohd Wazir and Dr Kevin Kotiben are appreciative of the financial aid.

the latest Permai announcement," she said.

The mother of one said the frontliners, who have been working non-stop to fight the pandemic, also felt appreciated with the one-off payment.

"While most people are trying to avoid Covid-19 patients, we have to be brave to face them," she added.

Under Permai, the government will give out the one-off payment to all medical frontliners, with RM300 to be given in the first quarter of this year.

The government will also allocate RM1bil worth of additional supplies, with RM800mil for the Health Ministry to buy additional reagents, screening kits and personal protection equipment.

Some RM150mil will also be allocated to hire 3,500 more health workers, which includes medical health assistants, paramedics, laboratory technicians and nurses.

In Penang, Kepala Batas Hospital emergency unit head Dr Suhaida Hanis Johani said it's important that medical frontliners have the right

personal protective equipment (PPE), face shields, high-quality face masks and other crucial equipment that are needed to keep them safe.

"Frontliners use different face masks and they are expensive. We must use the surgical three-ply mask, while for procedures, the N95 is needed, which is expensive.

"There is a different version of PPE, called powered air-purifying respirators, which is meant to be used by medical personnel during certain invasive procedures, in the ICU and for emergency physicians.

"It is crucial to protect healthcare workers. The need for protection comes from dealing with Covid-19 positive patients and sometimes those who are still waiting for their results.

"We expose ourselves to different things every day that could be dangerous," she said.

Penang Health Department environmental health, food safety and quality officer Mohd Wazir Khalid said they are thankful to know that the government recognises what they have been doing since last year.

"Apart from cash assistance, the allocation should also be used for the well-being of frontliners and to improve the equipment used to fight the pandemic," he said.

Another public healthcare professional attached to a government clinic in the state said it's important to have the proper equipment and gear in handling Covid-19 cases.

Assistant environmental health officer Jim Marvick Kotiben, who is attached to the Sabah Health Department, was also thankful for the reinforcement in the public health system to fight the pandemic.

"After the third wave, many frontliners are tired and stretched to the limit. I'm glad the government has thought of this initiative," he said.

His brother, Kevin, who is a doctor in Hospital Kota Marudu, was also grateful for the allocations and is also looking forward to the vaccine rollout, which is expected to start in phases next month.

"Every government initiative to help combat this pandemic and the rollout of the vaccine can bring cases under control," he said.