

Kenyan government challenged to pay striking doctors' salaries

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The Kenyan government has been challenged to take over the responsibility of paying salaries of the striking doctors from the counties.

Tana River governor, Hussein Dado, said it was the ministry of health that signed the controversial collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with doctors in 2013. He said the national government should, therefore, take the bold step of paying them the eye-watering 300% salary increment and end the strike.

This comes as Tharaka-Nithi County said it will not pay striking doctors December salaries.



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Addressing journalists at Oda Health Centre during an Islamic Maulid celebration, Dado accused the ministry of sidelining counties when signing the CBA.

"It sounds like a deliberate move to transfer the problem to county governments, because we were not party to that agreement despite doctors being county employees after devolution of health services," he said.

However, counties did not have the money for the pay rise that the ministry agreed to implement.

Saying Tana River is one of disadvantaged counties, where lack of private hospitals has complicated the situation, he said: "I have pleaded with my doctors and nurses to understand the situation and continue to assist patients until the matter is resolved."

The governor praised health workers in the county for their actions during the recent cholera outbreak in Tana Delta sub-county, where six people died and more than 30 were treated and discharged.

"I am happy with their good gesture and, as the county government, we shall do our best to facilitate them to improve the health of our people," he added.

He said the cholera situation had been contained following a massive health campaign mounted by the county's medical team, Kenya Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders.

He, however, denied that his government had neglected health services, saying it spent millions of shillings on procurement of medicines and equipment and improving health infrastructure.

Cholera outbreak

The governor was responding to a complaint by doctors and nurses that lack of adequate resources from the county government had made it difficult for them to contain a cholera outbreak that had killed about 35 people and seen more than 683 treated and discharged over the past year.

"We have done our best but it is common to hear people complaining that we have not done much," said Dado. "We have allocated enormous resources to revamp the health sector and we will increase funds in order to address all the grey areas."

On Wednesday, Tharaka-Nithi governor Samuel Ragwa told the *Nation* newspaper that the county's doctors, who had boycotted duty for 23 days, paralysing main services, especially surgical and consultation, will not be paid a coin.

"The strike is illegal as far as counties are concerned and the doctors will be treated as having absconded duty for nearly a month," said Ragwa. The governor said he will convene his cabinet and health department stakeholders today to decide on the way forward.

Source: allAfrica

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