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'One district, one hosp' is unrealistic: 8 Rahman

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Samantha Sulit

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Board of Directors Chairman Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan called for a rethink of the "one district, one hospital" approach in Sabah, stating that it no longer reflects the realities the State is facing.

He argued that applying the same rule uniformly across the nation cannot adequately address the State's healthcare needs.

"We can no longer stick to the old rule of 'one district, one hospital' as it is not fair to the people of Lahad Datu, Kunak, Tawau, Sandakan and other areas of the East Coast who are forced to compete for healthcare services and hospital beds with undocumented migrants," he said in his speech during the officiation the UMS Hospital (HUMS) Primary Care Centre.

Rahman explained that Sabah faces unique pressure from undocumented migrants, which increases the demand for healthcare services.

He further linked healthcare pressure to broader resource competition in the state, including subsidised goods such as fuel and rice, as well as transport access, noting that multiple essential services are also affected.

"States like Perlis, Pahang and Sarawak do not face this issue — only Sabah does, due to its geopolitical position and geographic proximity to regions that contribute to a high number of undocumented migrants," he said.

In regards to this, he suggested that the East Coast should have at least two to three hospitals per district, as it is a necessary adjustment which responds to real demand.

He also urged university leaders, med-



Rahman (centre) cutting the ribbon to the newly-opened Primary Care Centre.

ical professionals and political representatives in Sabah to bring the matter to the Federal Government for consideration, stressing that policy change is necessary.

Speaking on the newly-opened Primary Care Centre, Rahman hoped it would reduce hospital congestion, increase public health awareness and help people receive early and effective treatment.

He added that the centre would also serve as an important training ground for medical and health science students at UMS, where they would learn not only medical knowledge, but also humanity, empathy, compassion and responsibility toward patients.

"A good doctor is not only someone who can read laboratory results or make diagnoses. A good doctor is someone who makes patients feel heard, respected and reassured," he said.

Meanwhile, Rahman, who is also the Suria Capital Non-Executive Chairman, proposed global collaboration between HUMS and major medical institutions, aiming to establish a world-class clinical

presence in Sabah.

He said the proposal is based on the State's geographical advantage, which places it at the centre of Asia and strategically located within the broader Borneo region.

"This positioning could support the development of internationally connected healthcare services," he suggested.

He added that such collaboration could help raise healthcare standards in the State while complementing existing efforts to expand local medical training and services.

He said the idea would be discussed with State leadership and relevant stakeholders, including those in investment-linked development initiatives, noting that there is growing interest in developing world-class hospital infrastructure in the State.

"I hope that HUMS could eventually be part of this international healthcare vision, alongside broader efforts to improve access and quality of care in the state," he said.



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SUMMARIES

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