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Missing patient file highlights Sabah healthcare pressures

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KOTA KINABALU: A missing patient file is more than misplaced paperwork as it can disrupt continuity of treatment, said Tuaran MP Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau, who cited his father's experience at a government health clinic in Penampang in calling for urgent improvements to Sabah's healthcare services.

Sharing his remarks during debate on the report of the Health Select Committee's working visit to Sabah, Madius said his father's medical records could not be located after a blood sample was taken.

He said his younger sibling brought their father to the clinic at about 10am and observed approximately 200 elderly patients waiting, with some seated and others standing.

According to his account, only two doctors were seen treating patients in a small room while sharing a small table.

After the blood sample was taken, a doctor asked for his father's case notes to be placed on the table while awaiting the test results.

"Two hours later, the records could not be traced. As of this morning, October 5, 2026, my father's case notes had still not been found," he said.

Madius stressed that he was not blaming the doctors or other healthcare personnel, who were also working under cramped and stressful conditions.

"But when a patient's records cannot be traced, what is lost is not merely a file. What is interrupted is the history of illness, medications, examination results and continuity of treatment," he said.

He called for Budget 2027 to provide five commitments to address healthcare pressures in Sabah, including a special plan to reduce congestion at hospitals and government health clinics.

The other proposals were the establishment of a Health Service Commission, restoration of the Regional Incentive Payment to a progressive salary-based structure, and an integrated electronic medical records system linking clinics and hospitals.

He also proposed a RM5,000 starting bonus and a RM10,000 retention bonus for medical officers serving in Sabah and Sarawak.

"Do not add buildings without personnel. Do not post doctors without giving them reasons to come and stay," he said.

He suggested that part of the funding could come from rationalising sugar subsidies or incentives, which he said amounted to approximately RM500 million annually.

"Tuaran is not asking for special treatment. Tuaran is demanding fair treatment based on Sabah's realities," he said.

He urged follow-through on the committee's report, stressing that the health of Sabah's people could not continue to wait.