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MP demands action on Sabah's healthcare woes

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Government must take concrete and comprehensive measures to address overcrowding at hospitals and health clinics in Sabah, including strengthening the workforce, providing more competitive incentives and improving medical records management systems.

Tuaran MP Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau ***(pic)*** said every recommendation in the Health Select Committee's report on its working visit to Sabah must be translated into action, allocations, clear timelines and measurable performance indicators.

He said overcrowding was not merely about the number of patients waiting for treatment, but also involved a shortage of healthcare personnel, limited treatment space, delays in referrals and weaknesses in patient record management.

"When health clinics do not have sufficient space and personnel, the pressure is transferred to hospitals. In Tuaran, that pressure eventually reaches referral hospitals in Kota Kinabalu," he said when debating the report in the Dewan Rakyat here on Monday.

Madius, who is also Upko honorary president, also shared his father's experience seeking treatment at a health clinic in Penampang, where about 200 elderly patients were reportedly waiting for treatment.

He said only two doctors were seen treating patients in a small room, while his father's medical records could not subsequently be traced after a blood sample was taken.

He said the matter had been referred to the Sabah State Health director for investigation, but the records had yet to be found.

Madius stressed that he did not blame the doctors or healthcare personnel as they were also working under conditions of limited space and resources.

"When a patient's medical records cannot be traced, it is not just a file that is lost. What is lost is the patient's medical history, medication, test results and continuity of care," he said.

Meanwhile, Madius outlined five commitments that should be given attention by the Government under Budget 2027, including the preparation of a Special Plan to Reduce Hospital and Health Clinic Overcrowding in Sabah, complete with priorities, allocations and timelines.

He also proposed the establishment of a Health Services Commission with a specific mandate to plan workforce requirements, manage appointments and career pathways, and determine a competitive remuneration framework for healthcare and medical personnel.

In addition, he called for the Regional Incentive Payment to be restored to a progressive structure based on salary, with medical officers given priority as an emergency measure if its implementation could not yet be extended to all civil servants.

Madius who is also the Tamparuli assemblyman also proposed a RM5,000 starting bonus for medical officers who report for permanent postings in Sabah or Sarawak, as well as a RM10,000 retention bonus after completing five years of service.

To develop more local medical personnel, he proposed that a reasonable intake quota be allocated to Sabah and Sarawak students pursuing medical studies at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

At the same time, he also suggested that equivalent incentives be provided to Sabahan doctors serving in Sabah, particularly those working in rural areas.

"Such rewards should be based on the difficulty of the posting and the value of the service provided, rather than a doctor's state of origin," he said.

Madius also urged the Government to implement an integrated and secure electronic medical records system linking clinics and hospitals to ensure continuity of care while improving the security and confidentiality of patient information.

On funding, he proposed that part of the savings from the rationalisation of subsidies or incentives be channelled towards healthcare workforce incentives.

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

Madius urged the relevant Minister to explain whether the five commitments would be included in Budget 2027.

"Do not add buildings without personnel. Do not post doctors without giving them a reason to come and stay. Do not table a report without ensuring its implementation," he said.