

Offer Permanent Residency to attract peninsula docs

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By: David Thien

Kota Kinabalu: A Town Hall meeting organised by Sabah Action Body Advocating Rights (Sabar) with medical professionals from all over Sabah saw a majority call by the various groups – the need for a Sabah Ministry of Health.

They believe this could solve a lot of problems like postings to Sabah.

Only the medical fraternity were involved in the session as Sabar wanted contributing stakeholders and not the public to have their say.

One suggestion was for the State Government to offer non-Sabahan medical staff permanent residency so that they do not have to spend time to attend to immigration matters while serving in rural areas.

Consultant Obstetrician/Gynaecologist Dr Felice Huang said health officers who have served in Sabah (more so in rural areas) should be accorded priority for permanent posts and Permanent Resident status.

Otherwise, they would be constantly burdened with the bureaucratic hassle of renewing their work or entry permits despite contributing to Sabah's development in medicine.

Like Sarawak which uses own funds to repair dilapidated schools and clinics before claiming back the expenses from the Federal Government, there is a need to construct rest facilities for doctors and nurses where there are no such facilities.

Many just manage to rest for 10 hours and continue working. There have been cases of doctors who fell asleep while driving and were killed in accidents.

Daily many suffer from lack of sleep and exhaustion. When workload kept increasing, there is no increase in manpower and the same number of medical staff have to keep up with the stressful chores. This demotivated and affected family ties as less quality time could be spent with loved ones.

There is also need to provide health insurance for medical staff and assistance for further education.

There was a call for a Starlink satellite solution for Sabah, and to increase the number of ATMs in rural areas. But if there are outages, the ATMs would also not dispense needed cash to buy things.

There were calls for better retirement benefits and decent staff housing.

Doctors who sacrificed much to serve in rural or remote posts should be offered permanent posts and promotion prospects. There should be extra points given for rural services as it is hard to serve in rural areas compared to urban areas.

On average only seven out of 70 doctors posted to Sabah took up the offer.

If JPA scholarships were offered for post-graduate studies after serving a few years in Sabah, probably those 63 doctors who did not want to come, might reconsider.

The patient population in Kota Kinabalu may be around 500,000 citizens but the numbers go up to one million and beyond with the non-citizens – documented and undocumented illegals.

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"Sabah Voices to Action - Shaping Sabah's Future Together" is a citizen-driven, non-partisan initiative running from March to June 2025, dedicated to amplifying Sabahans' voices, fostering meaningful discussions, and shaping policies on education, healthcare, public infrastructure, and good governance.

Join the Movement:

<https://www.sabar.org.my/action/#join-movement>

Podcast Channel:

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Website: <https://sabar.org.my/action/>

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Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Sabah!

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025

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Medical professionals and Sabar members in a group photo session after the Town Hall session.

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