

MMA calls for Borneo incentive to be restored amid doctor no-show reports

By Noor Atiqah Sulaiman

October 1, 2026 @ 11:05am



The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called on the government to restore percentage-based Borneo Incentive (BIW) payments to attract and retain doctors in Sabah and Sarawak following reports that up to 76 per cent of medical officers failed to report for permanent postings. - File pic.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called on the government to restore percentage-based Borneo Incentive (BIW) payments to attract and retain doctors in Sabah and Sarawak following reports that up to 76 per cent of medical officers failed to report for permanent postings.

MMA president Dr L Sivanaesan said the reported high number of medical officers who did not report for permanent postings in Sabah and Sarawak on Sept 28 should be taken seriously, particularly reports that some facilities received no new medical officers.

"Where contract medical officers are declining permanent posts, it indicates a deeper problem that cannot be ignored.

"For years, doctors have looked to permanent appointments as a form of security. The fact that some are now reportedly turning them down should be a clear warning that the conditions and terms of service in Borneo are discouraging doctors from serving there," he said in a statement today.

BIW payments are currently made at a fixed rate.

A health portal had previously reported that more than 70 per cent of medical officers failed to report for permanent positions at various government hospitals and clinics in Sabah and Sarawak.

Government doctors also reported on social media that some facilities received no medical officers, while others received fewer than the number allocated.

At Hospital Sri Aman, for example, 20 medical officers were listed to report for duty but only six did so.

Similar situations were reported at several other hospitals, including those in Miri, Kapit, Keningau, Beluran, Sipitang, Kudat, Ranau and Beaufort.

Dr Sivanaesan said the issue went beyond the choice between permanent and contract employment, as doctors might have to move far from their families, bear high relocation costs and serve at severely understaffed facilities with heavy workloads.

"In some areas, accommodation and support are also inadequate.

"We need to stop blaming doctors and start asking why the system is failing to attract and retain them," he said.

MMA proposed seven measures for immediate action, including restoring percentage-based BIW payments and introducing Sabah and Sarawak-specific service allowances for medical officers.

It also proposed additional incentives such as housing assistance, transport support and retention bonuses.

The association said relocation assistance should also be reviewed to reflect the actual cost of moving to Sabah and Sarawak and be paid before doctors relocate, rather than months later through a claims process.

It also called for greater certainty over the duration of postings in Sabah and Sarawak.

"Doctors whose long-term preference is to serve in Peninsular Malaysia but who are posted to Sabah or Sarawak should be given a clear service period, with a transparent pathway for transfer back once that period ends.

"Knowing from the outset how long they are expected to serve there may encourage more doctors to accept such postings," it said.

MMA also called for better living and working conditions, particularly in rural areas.

"Quarters in rural areas must be safe, well-maintained and adequately furnished, with reliable water and electricity supplies, internet access and transport connections," it said.

The association said rural service should also be recognised in postgraduate training, specialist career pathways, promotions and future preferred postings.

It also called for better awareness and voluntary pathways for doctors to serve in East Malaysia, with clear information on the challenges, career opportunities and benefits before they choose their postings.