

## **'Influx of migrants a burden on Sabah health services'**

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**By Aidila Razak**

The Sabah Health Department considers the influx of migrants into the state a "threat to national security" and a "burden" to the state health services.

The department's deputy director for the contagious diseases division, Dr Maria Sulaiman, said treatment provided to foreigners was taking up resources which "can be used to treat the locals".

Testifying before the royal commission of inquiry on immigrants in Sabah, Maria said the fees outstanding from foreign patients treated at government hospitals and clinics from 2007 to 2012 totalled a whopping RM21.6 million.

In contrast, Malaysians during the same period owed the government hospitals and clinics about RM7 million in outstanding fees.

RM200,000 spent just to control measles

Maria said the department spent RM200,000 in 2011 to control measles outbreak among foreigners in Kinabatangan and Beluran. Outbreaks of measles, cholera, leprosy and viral hepatitis were "common" among non-citizens.

The 75th witness to testify before the RCI, Maria said Sabah's hospitals treated 1.3 million foreigners as inpatients and outpatients from 2000 to 2011.

In the same period, 122,882 non-citizen births took place in government hospitals, with a quarter of babies born in these hospitals in 2011 being born to non-citizen parents.

"This is very worrying," said the doctor who has served in the medical service in Sabah for 22 years.

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