

EDITOR, NEWS DESK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SUHAKAM CALLS FOR TRANSPARENT INVESTIGATION AND RIGHTS-BASED
REVIEW FOLLOWING FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE TRAGEDY**

KUALA LUMPUR (11 SEPTEMBER 2026) – The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) extends its deepest condolences to the families, colleagues and loved ones of the pilot and four Ministry of Health personnel who lost their lives in the Flying Doctor Service (FDS) helicopter crash near Long Lellang, Ulu Baram, Sarawak, on 8 September 2026.

SUHAKAM notes that an investigation by the Air Accident Investigation Bureau is underway and calls for it to be conducted independently, thoroughly and transparently. The investigation should examine not only the immediate cause of the crash, but also the aircraft's airworthiness and maintenance history, operational and risk-management procedures, weather conditions, the safety and suitability of the relevant airfield or landing facilities and the broader arrangements governing the delivery of the FDS. Its findings should be made public within a reasonable timeframe, together with clear recommendations, accountability where warranted, and effective measures to prevent a recurrence.

SUHAKAM further urges the relevant authorities to immediately review the safety and airworthiness of aircraft used to deliver essential public services. Where credible safety concerns arise, the aircraft concerned should be grounded pending comprehensive technical inspection and clearance by the appropriate aviation authorities. The protection of human life must take precedence over operational, contractual or financial considerations. Procurement and contract oversight must ensure strict and continuous compliance with applicable safety standards, including aircraft maintenance, crew competency, operational suitability and emergency preparedness.

This tragedy also highlights a broader human rights concern. Communities in the interior of Sarawak, many of whom are Indigenous Peoples, continue to face significant geographical and infrastructural barriers to essential healthcare. While the FDS remains vital in reaching remote communities and must be sustained, it should complement, not substitute, long-term investment in accessible healthcare facilities, trained healthcare personnel, safe roads and bridges, reliable communications and alternative modes of transportation. Equitable access to healthcare is central to the right to the highest attainable standard of health, a fundamental economic, social and cultural right, and to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all.

SUHAKAM therefore calls on the relevant Federal and Sarawak authorities to undertake a comprehensive, rights-based review of healthcare delivery in the interior. This should involve meaningful consultation with affected communities, healthcare workers and relevant stakeholders, identify existing gaps, and establish clear, adequately funded and time-bound measures to strengthen permanent healthcare facilities, transport connectivity and emergency response capacity.

The safety of healthcare personnel and the right of rural and Indigenous communities to accessible, available and quality healthcare are not competing priorities. Both must be protected. Healthcare workers should not be exposed to avoidable risks because of longstanding infrastructure gaps, just as communities should not be deprived of essential healthcare because of where they live. This tragedy must be a turning point towards safer public services, stronger accountability and more equitable access to healthcare for the people of Sarawak's interior.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
11 September 2026**