

Malaysia to set up nationwide telehealth services in rural areas

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Sabah Government welcomes initiatives from private companies that can help improve healthcare outcomes



MEASAT Global Berhad, Malaysia's Rural Broadband Service Provider, has teamed up with healthcare technology company Mudah Healthtech Sdn Bhd to offer the Sihat Xpress telehealth service in remote communities enabled by the CONNECTme NOW satellite broadband service.

To mark the partnership, the two companies introduced the initiative and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at Kg Togop Darat 1 in Ranau, the first rural Sihat Xpress site in Malaysia, serving as a Proof-of-Concept for improving rural healthcare through digital technology. The MoU signing was witnessed by YB Datuk Flovia Ng, Assistant Minister of Community Development and People's Wellbeing for Sabah.

Through the MoU, MEASAT and Mudah Healthtech aim to provide digital healthcare services for up to 1,000,000 Malaysians in unserved and underserved rural and remote communities nationwide, leveraging on close to 4,000 CONNECTme NOW hotspots located across rural Malaysia, supported by MEASAT's expansive rural distribution network.

The MoU also sees the two companies committing to digitalise clinics with telehealth capabilities, enabling at least 1,000 doctors to support up to 2,000 Sihat Xpress rural telehealth kiosks to be rolled out at CONNECTme NOW sites within the next 2 years.

The Sihat Xpress initiative in rural areas is aligned with national goals to digitalise all healthcare facilities by 2030 to uplift service delivery, and the potential implementation of telehealth as a cost-effective method to address gaps in high-quality healthcare delivery in remote areas besides collecting data to support public health planning to achieve better outcomes.

Acknowledging a healthcare service gap between urban and rural areas, caused by uneven distribution of healthcare facilities, including digital facilities and services, the Federal Government seeks to enable equal access to quality healthcare services among the rakyat through policies like the 12th Malaysia Plan, addressing the geographical challenges faced by residents in isolated regions who typically travel for hours to receive healthcare, by increasing the number of healthcare professionals in remote areas and leveraging emerging technologies to digitalise healthcare services.