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Chua-Privatisation

NO INCREASE IN HOSPITAL CHARGES DESPITE PRIVATISATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 28 (Bernama) - The Government does not propose for the time being to raise hospital charges following the privatisation of five support services in government hospitals throughout the country from Jan 1, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today.

"At the moment no, but of course in the long term there is a big possibility of an increase as the level of service to patients is enhanced in line with the increasing affluence of this country," he said.

He was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of a 15-year concession agreement to take over five types of services at government hospitals.

Three companies had been given the concession to undertake and manage five support services at the hospitals and four medical institutions under the privatised project which would cost RM500 million a year over 15 years effective from Jan 1.

The concessionaires are Faber Medi-Serve Sdn Bhd which would take over the services in the northern zone covering Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Sabah including Labuan and Sarawak; Radicare (M) Sdn Bhd (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan) and Tongkah Medinvest Sdn Bhd which would take over support services in hospitals in Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Johor.

The services that would be privatised are clinical waste management involving the collection, storage, transportation, incineration and disposal of clinical wastes in an environmentally friendly manner, cleansing services, linen and laundry services, engineering maintenance services and bio-medical engineering services.

"Definitely fees will have to go up as well, but in the end, we have a better system, that is the full point of privatisation, a better and excellent system for our patients."

"The three companies are given three months to put everything in order to enable patients enjoy clean wards, good standard clean linen in terms of health care, disposal of toxic materials, ensure safety of hospital staff and overall it will provide a better system both to hospital staff and in terms of patient satisfaction."

"I hope the number of complaints from the public will be fewer once the services improve and that is why we are appointing a Supervisory Branch which will also be privatised in the Ministry's Engineering Division to monitor the running of the privatised scheme."

Signing on behalf of the Government was the Acting Secretary-General of the Health Ministry P Venugopal while Datuk Ismail Mansor represented Faber Medi-Serve Sdn Bhd, Azmi Haji Jaafar (Radicare) and Mokhzani Mahathir (Tongkah Medinvest Sdn Bhd).

Speaking at the function, Chua said a total of 2,681 ministry employees were involved in the privatisation and a total of 3,844 posts in the ministry would be abolished following privatisation and thus would ease the government's financial burden.

He said under the privatisation agreement, the ownership of the relevant assets of the Health Ministry would be transferred to the private sector and the affected employees would be given option papers from tomorrow.

"In government hospitals in this country, nurses and attendants spend about 25 to 30 per cent of their time handling laundry and hospital linen

and with the privatisation they will no longer be doing this work and can concentrate on looking after the sick," he said.

Chua said under the agreement the companies concerned had to have quality assurance programme for the five services and should attain the ISO 9002 standard within five years. -- BERNAMA

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