

Chua off to Russia, unable to attend JE meeting

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PETALING JAYA, Mon: Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng is unable to meet Bukit Pelanduk pig farmers tomorrow as he will be flying off to Russia.

An aide said the minister will be accompanying Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and is expected to be back only on Sept 18.

DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock had invited Chua to a meeting in Port Dickson with farmers who claim that RM18 million in the Japanese encephalitis (JE) fund has yet to be disbursed.

"The farmers should seek help from the Agri-

culture Ministry as the JE fund is under its responsibility," said the aide.

He added that the farmers did not send any letter to Chua on the meeting.

When contacted, Kerk said since Chua is unable to attend tomorrow's meeting, the least he can do is send a representative to Bukit Pelanduk.

He said the farmers will be at the Fook Lone coffee shop tomorrow morning as they want to highlight their plight and unhappiness over the matter.

He added that they may also resort to writing to the prime minister to order an investigation.

Chua said recently at pig farmers affected by the Nipah virus outbreak have been adequately compensated.

The chairman of the 1999 JE/Nipah virus disaster and rescue committee, Lay Yong Tee, said Bukit Pelanduk farmers will travel to Sarawak on a "tell-all mission" if the government refuses to disburse the RM18 million.

Agriculture Ministry's parliamentary secretary Datuk Abu Bakar Taib had told parliament last month that the remaining sum will be kept to compensate others should the JE outbreak occur again.