

DAP wants gov't to reveal real cost of hospital
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Sarawak General Hospital's Clinical Research Centre head Professor Dr Sim Kui Hian has been urged to make full disclosure on the total cost of the Heart Hospital in Kota Samarahan, which Prime Minister Najib Razak opened last week.

"Since Sim wants to contest in the coming Sarawak state election, he must give details of the total cost involved," Sarawak DAP secretary Chong Chieng Jen said at his daily press conference today.

He said the doctor, who has been nominated by the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) to contest in Pending, against incumbent and Sarawak DAP treasurer Violet Yong, should have no reason for any fear.

Sim is the son of the late Sim Kheng Hong, a former deputy chief minister of Sarawak, and a cousin of SUPP secretary-general Sim Kheng Hui.

Kheng Hui lost to Yong in the 2006 state election.

The federal government took over the heart hospital from the state-owned Sarawak International Medical Centre last year at a cost of more than RM400 million.

Originally supposed to operate as a private hospital, it did not get off the ground because of many internal problems. Work started in 2003 and it was scheduled to be ready in 2006, but was only completed last year.

Federal gov't stepped in, after pleas from Sarawak

Things did not go as planned and the federal government stepped in, after pleas from the Abdul Taib Mahmud administration.

"The total cost of the hospital three years ago was about RM400 million, but I have heard that this has jumped to over RM600 million," Chong (right), who is also the MP for Bandar Kuching, said.

"Since Sim's name has been proposed by SUPP for the Pending state seat, he is duty-bound to let the people know the total cost of the hospital.

"As a doctor, he is duty-bound to the medical profession, but now that he is a politician as well, he must be accountable to the people by releasing details on the hospital," he said.

Chong said the hospital has turned out to be the most expensive in Malaysia, if the total cost of construction was RM400 million as reported and the number of beds at 168 were to be taken into account.

"Based on calculations, the cost of one bed in the hospital will be RM3.2 million, way above the RM500,000 per bed Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai mentioned last year.

'Even Petronas specialist centre cost less'

Chong said even Petronas' medical specialist centre, supposed to be the most expensive hospital in the country, could not beat the Kota Samarahan heart hospital in terms of cost per bed.

The cost per bed at the Petronas specialist centre, Chong said, was RM1.2 million.

"The people demand transparency on the part of the BN government, and Dr Sim is in the best position to let the people know.

"He must let the people know the condition of the medical equipment when the federal government bought the hospital," Chong said, adding that he did not want to speculate on the element of corruption in the construction as he did not have any proof.

However, he was quick to add that the DAP did not oppose the construction of more hospitals in Sarawak, but that this should be done in a transparent and efficient manner," he said.

"There should be no leakage or corruption involved in the construction of hospitals."

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