

1Care marked by 'indecent haste', says Kee Kwong

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A senior PKR leader has characterised as “indecent haste” the government’s healthcare proposal that is said to be set for promulgation amid criticism and anxiety from concerned professionals.

Dr Tan Kee Kwong, head of the party’s disciplinary panel and likely candidate for the Wangsa Maju parliamentary seat in the Federal Territory, said:

“For a measure this huge and in a sector (healthcare) this important, the government’s approach is characterised by indecent haste and a lack of public consultation.

“Good healthcare is a citizen’s right, which makes any measure impacting that right the concern of everyone. This would make the lack of consultation and transparency concerning the government’s contemplated measure a source of grave concern to the people.”

Tan said details about the government’s healthcare proposal, called 1Care, requiring individuals to pay 10 percent of their annual income to the scheme, made the costs “onerous”, especially when the payee is restricted to six visits to the doctor in a year.

“Ten percent is not a small amount for an individual to fork out and when you are restricted to only six visits a year, that makes things lopsided because no normal person wants to visit a doctor unless he or she is really sick.

“A person who is ill may be required to see the doctor several times a year. The restriction on six visits is arbitrary and may turn out to be gravely limiting.”

Tan, who was a deputy minister in the BN government as an elected MP for the Gerakan component of the ruling coalition, said he had, intermittently, been part of the long-drawn and discursive process in which a national healthcare proposal germinated in the bowels of government.

Part of government study groups

He said he had been part of government study groups that have gone to many countries in the world to study various healthcare systems.

“The one that is now about to emanate from the government is said to involve a combination of the public and private sectors, but the costs to the citizen and the proposed limitations on frequency of medical attention for the payee suggest the project is weighted in favour of the provider, rather than the recipient.

“This will deprecate the right of citizens to healthcare and will tilt the emphasis in favour of profit to the provider,” commented Tan.

He envisages that in its approach to healthcare, a Pakatan government would weigh the balance in favour of the recipient of healthcare, rather than the provider.

“Details proposed by the ruling government that a certain percentage of the gross annual payment by individuals would go to a middleman managing the system are a recipe for bureaucratic bloat and profiteering,” said Tan.

He said the government should submit its proposals to broad consultation with the public and with healthcare professionals.

Tan added that initial details of the government's proposed scheme were a perversion of the Najib Razak administration's much-vaunted slogan of '1Malaysia - People First, Performance Now' into '1Care - Formulation First, Consultation Last'.

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