

Health Ministry: No indelible ink safety report provided

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The Health Ministry has apparently not provided any safety report on the indelible ink, nor has the Election Commission (EC) asked for such a report, according to Health Minister Dr S Subramaniam.

NONEHe said this when asked if it is true that the active ingredient in the ink - silver nitrate - had to be watered down to one percent to reduce cancer risk.

"I'm not sure (if there is cancer risk), you have to ask the EC on this. If you are asking whether they have asked us for any report on that, I don't think so," he said at a press conference today.

He then turned to another Health Ministry official to ask if the EC had approached the ministry to make "any presentation", and the reply was in the negative.

"If they have asked us and we have given a report, it is very different, but I am not sure, we can check it," he continued.

NONEEC chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof (left) had, during an interview with the Straits Times of Singapore on May 12, said that the EC was unable to add more silver nitrate to the ink mixture after being informed by the Health Ministry of the chemical compound's adverse health effects on users.

"We got a letter from the Health Ministry telling us that if we put more than one percent of silver nitrate in the ink, it could damage the kidney and cause cancer," Aziz had said in the interview.

However, this was disputed by a voter, who pointed out that there is no mention of carcinogenic, teratonic or mutating effects in the material safety data sheet (MSDS) for silver nitrate.

When the contradicting facts in Ahmad's statement and MSDS sheets were pointed out, Subramaniam said he needed to get more information on the matter.

"(This is) the first time I am hearing of this," he said.

Subramaniam was sworn in as health minister on May 16, taking over from his predecessor Liow Tiong Lai and leaving behind his previous portfolio as human

resources minister.

azlanMeanwhile, when asked about a protest being planned against a dramatised version of the controversial novel 'Interlok', Subramaniam said he is aware of the protest.

"Although the book was already controversial before, a drama would be a double controversy.

"So we will speak to the Information Ministry and the prime minister and see how we can help solve this problem," the MIC deputy president said.

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