

Health minister says Penang docs not racist

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By Susan Loone

The Health Ministry did not detect any element of racism in its investigation into complaints of allegedly racist doctors in Penang over their "refusal" to treat Malay patients.

"So far, it does not look like that, but there are elements of poor communication, where the doctors did not communicate very well with the patients," Health Minister Dr S Subramaniam said.

"It just so happened that the doctors are Chinese Malaysians and the patients are Malays," Subramaniam said after attending a dinner hosted by the Health Ministry in Penang last night, which was attended by 180 state MIC branch chiefs.

Subramaniam was asked to comment on the progress of the probe and if there was any element of racism in the alleged refusal of the doctors to treat their patients.

NONEThe allegation was raised by Umno's Pinang Tunggal assemblyperson Roslan Saidin (right in photo) at the state assembly on July 3.

Roslan told the assembly that the incidents involved six patients, two doctors from the Kepala Batas Hospital and one from the Seberang Jaya Hospital.

He then went on to link his claim of racist doctors to the drop in support for the BN from the Chinese community in the 13th general election.

NONESubramaniam (right) said the ministry and the state Health Department launched the investigation, which would be completed very soon.

He said members of the investigation committee have spoken to several patients said to be were victims of the "racism".

"They were unhappy with the treatment by the doctors. We have identified many factors for this, included poor communication skills and lack of clinical competency," he said.

Subra sidesteps question

Asked why the ministry had been waiting for information from the state

government to carry out the investigation, Subramaniam would only say, "We have got whatever information we need."

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng was upset with the earlier statement by Deputy Health Minister Hilmi Yahya that the state government had "promised verbally or in writing" to investigate the allegations of "racist doctors".

Lim explained that his administration had no power to investigate the doctors as public hospitals were under the jurisdiction of the Health Ministry and federal government.

"The state health director wanted to know what was discussed in the state legislative assembly," Subramaniam said.

"What they had then was very rudimentary, with no details of the incidents or people concerned," he added.

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