

1 Care not yet cast in stone, says Health D-G
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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 10 — The director-general of Health today insisted that the controversial 1 Care proposal is still a “work in progress” and that the government could reject the scheme if found to be unacceptable to Malaysians.

Datuk Seri Dr Hasan Abdul Rahman took great pains to point out that the details surrounding the healthcare were still “ideas” and “proposals” and that nothing had been set in stone, despite news reports stating otherwise.

“Talking about 1 Care, this is still very much (a) work in progress. There are 11 main Technical Working Groups (TWGs) with multi-sectoral participation, both public and private,” he said during his keynote address at the 9th annual scientific meeting of the Malaysian Society of Hypertension here.

He later told reporters at a news conference that the 11 working groups had been given a 2013 deadline to come with a 1 Care scheme blueprint for the government.

“If it (the blueprint) is not acceptable to the government, it can be rejected... then the working groups would have to work on it.

“If the proposal is agreed by the government, then we will present it to the public... but right now it is a proposal, it is not yet implemented,” Dr Hasan (picture) said when asked how far was the government from implementing the new healthcare scheme.

The director-general explained that a rumoured move to force Malaysians to contribute 10 per cent of their salaries to finance the scheme was just one of the “proposals” of the working groups.

“The 10 per cent is a proposal. We know that Malaysians are very sensitive about paying.”

He said that RM34 billion had been set by the government and the private sector for this new scheme, and that under the scheme all costs of medical visits and treatments will be borne by a central government agency which will pool contributions from “the government, employer, employee and those self-employed.”

“There is a need to review, reform and restructure the current healthcare system for both the government and private.

“Under the idea, we optimise the system, you can choose your doctor and you can go to any clinic, private or government as the costs will be paid by an authority handled by the government,” he added.

“It’s very simple. Say you need to be hospitalised and this system allows you a two-person per ward stay, but if you want one which you don’t want to share, then you have to pay for that option,” said Dr Hasan.

He said that 1 Care would eventually ease patient congestion in government clinics as people could now seek treatment at private ones.

Dr Hasan's remarks come amid reports stating that the national healthcare proposal will be made mandatory for all Malaysians.

The deputy director of the National Health Financing unit, Dr Rozita Halina Hussein, said yesterday 1 Care would have to be made mandatory, but that private healthcare providers would be given a choice on whether to participate in the new healthcare system that has seen stiff opposition from stakeholder groups.

"Mandatory is the word used by the media, it is mandatory meaning it covers all Malaysians, it is a system for all Malaysians," said Dr Hasan in response today.

A source however told The Malaysian Insider that the healthcare scheme is at a "very, very advanced" stage of planning and is not as preliminary as the Health Ministry has made it out to be.

1 Care has come under fire from healthcare practitioners and the public, who claim that individuals and businesses will be forced to hand over 10 per cent of their earnings each month to the government-run insurance fund.

The scheme is expected to replace the current two-tier healthcare system with one which integrates both private and government hospitals in the hope of ensuring more equitable healthcare for Malaysians of all classes.

Under the present system, patients can choose to seek treatment at either private clinics or hospitals and pay out of their own pockets or opt for government clinics or hospitals instead, where they will pay a nominal fee for basic, federally subsidised healthcare.

The ministry has assured critics that the 1 Care scheme will not burden the public with undue costs, saying that talks on the financial arrangements that will be made available and their impact on the government and taxpayers were ongoing.

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