

No 1 Care until right model found, says minister
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PUTRAJAYA, March 4 — Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai sought to assure the public that the proposed 1 Care revamp will not go through until a suitable model is found for the healthcare scheme, Bernama Online reported today.

“If it is found not suitable, it will not be implemented. That is why we have formed technical working groups to study and engage various stakeholders to ascertain the suitability and viability of such a model, and this is very much at the preliminary stage,” Liow was quoted as saying in the report.

The minister added that Putrajaya has yet to whittle down the list of models the revamp could take and said his ministry was still evaluating these for feasibility.

“There are many modalities being studied, but (there is) no final decision yet. That is why we engaged the stakeholders to give us their views. It’s not true that it is a done deal,” he said.

Among the systems being evaluated are a health insurance model, an EPF-like scheme, social health insurance, taxation, and various combinations of the aforementioned structures.

Liow stressed that nothing was yet finalised and sought to debunk the rumours surrounding the healthcare revamped that has drawn criticism from various quarters.

Chief among the claims surrounding the system is the purported 10 per cent mandatory salary deduction that all employees must pay towards the scheme.

Today, Liow said the figure was “not the amount to be deducted from individual’s income”, but an estimation of the monthly amount needed by an average household to cater to its healthcare requirements.

The minister also sought to allay fears that the scheme would force patients towards private healthcare providers or be farmed out to third-party commercial administrators.

“It will not be privatised. Efforts will be made to ensure transparent management of this autonomous body through legislation, inclusive representation of stakeholders and other means,” he said.

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 that 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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