

Uthayakumar's claim of improper medical care untrue: Suhakam

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by Azura Abas

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed: Allegations that Hindu Rights Action Force legal adviser P. Uthayakumar has been denied proper medical care are untrue, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia said today.

Commissioner Datuk Siva Subramaniam said Suhakam had a two-hour meeting with representatives from various quarters, including Taiping Hospital, the police and the Kamunting detention centre on Tuesday.

"The allegation that Uthayakumar was discharged from hospital while still being critically ill is untrue. The doctor who treated Uthayakumar has 20 years' experience in treating those with diabetes. Dr Letchuman had allowed him to leave the hospital based on a professional opinion that the detainee's health is fine," he said.

Siva dismissed allegations that the Hindraf legal adviser was not given medicine for his illnesses. For families of the detainees to provide their own medicine, they will have to get the approval from the hospital and prison authorities.

"Approval will only be given if the hospital does not have the needed medication," he said.

On a claim that Uthayakumar's food had salt and sugar in it, Siva said the relevant authority assured Suhakam that the detainee only received salt- and sugar-free food and drinks.

"Now, he eats bread and has requested for capati, too. If Uthayakumar wants salt, he will be supplied with it upon request," he said.

Siva also denied a claim that Uthayakumar was only taken care by a medical assistant. "A visiting doctor goes to the detention centre three times a week." In fact, he said, Uthayakumar would undergo medical checks soon.

"We have also checked the supply of medicine and met the doctors. We concluded that the detention centre has enough supply of medicine for various illnesses, including for diabetes.

Recently, Uthayakumar's mother had appealed for her son to be admitted to the National Heart Institute (IJN) or a private hospital of her choice. K. Kalaivani, 64, claimed that Uthayakumar's health was deteriorating at the Kamunting detention centre.

On the recent Lenggeng riot, Siva believed it was important to have the cooperation of embassies to solve immigrants' issues. Some 60 detainees, mostly Myanmar refugees, at the Lenggeng Immigration depot rioted on Monday, setting an administrative building ablaze and destroying office equipment.

Siva feared that the poor conditions at immigration detention centres were like a ticking time bomb. "The centres are overcrowded and the detainees are kept there far too long."

Siva said the centres could also tap into the resources of non-governmental organisations to help the refugees.