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Combining funds 'fraught with risk'



By The Nation
Published on August 22, 2009



A proposal to combine three major state healthwelfare funds is not going to be easy to put in practice, due to different management styles and political risks for any government that tried to do it, a Bangkok seminar was told yesterday.

Noted researcher Ammar Siamwalla said the management of the National Health Security Office (NHSO), the Social Security Office (SSO) and the bureaucratic welfare fund should be integrated under the same direction and regulations an essential condition which was not easy to do in itself in the first place, let alone combining the three funds together under one supervision.

"The treatment systems and welfare conditions in the three funds also need to be standardised, in order that the general public or existing beneficiaries in each fund could accept the idea and agree to undergo treatment through whichever channels," said Ammar, a scholar attached to the Thailand Development Research Institute.

Ammar also said he believed no politicians would want to disadvantage themselves by working on such a sensitive issue. "No government would dare to push for the changes," he said.

NHSO secretarygeneral Win Sawasdiworn commented that the three funds did not need to be united or combined, but standards of treatment and publichealth services provided by all government and private hospitals needed to be made equally good. He disagreed with the idea of including the wives and children of SSO beneficiaries in the welfare scheme. Ammar had supported this idea.

Manas Jamewayha, a senior Comptroller General's Department official, said the huge amount of Bt35 billion spent on medicine and treatment enjoyed by government officials could be reduced if a rule on doctors' prescriptions could be strengthened and enforced.

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