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MPs Speaking:	Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Dr Janil Puthucheary, Dr Janil Puthucheary (Pasir Ris-Punggol), The Minister for Communications and Information (Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim)

IMPACT OF PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT ON HEALTHCARE INFORMATION

27 Dr Janil Puthucheary asked the Minister for Communications and Information (a) to what extent is healthcare-related information affected or excluded by the Personal Data Protection Act; and (b) whether citizens' access to healthcare information about themselves will be affected by this Act.

The Minister for Communications and Information (Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim): Madam, the healthcare sector and healthcare-related information will continue to be regulated by existing laws, such as the Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Act. These laws set out data confidentiality and disclosure requirements relating to healthcare information. Medical professionals and healthcare institutions will continue to be subject to existing patient confidentiality requirements. Patients will also continue to be able to request for medical reports about their health status from healthcare institutions, as with current practice.

The Personal Data Protection Act, or the PDPA for short, will not override these existing laws and requirements. The PDPA is a baseline law that ensures a common standard of protection for individuals' personal data across the

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economy, especially in sectors where rules on the management of personal data are currently lacking. For sectors that are already regulated by other laws and regulations, such as the healthcare sector, the PDPA will apply concurrently. Organisations in those sectors will continue to comply with the requirements under their current laws and regulations as well as the PDPA. Where there are cases of inconsistency, the provisions of those other written laws will prevail.

Dr Janil Puthucheary (Pasir Ris-Punggol): Madam, a supplementary question for the Minister. For third-party providers that are not covered under the healthcare Act and MOH that are collecting information, either IT-providers or phone service providers, there is uncertainty because some of the information is collected in the context of healthcare but is not technical or medical information. Would that information be covered under the Personal Data Protection Act or the existing regulations?

Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim: For third-party providers, in certain cases, depending on what exactly the use of the data is collected for, we have to look at the usage. By and large, it should be covered because you are basically working on instruction of another party to collect the data for certain purposes. Therefore, the individual who is actually giving up the information must be assured that data is collected for that particular purpose. As far as we are concerned, the baseline of the PDPA will prevail across but, if there are exceptions to be made, we have to look at the exceptions because there are exceptions within this threshold.
