

Politician reports meddling with e-health system; prime minister parries

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Last Thursday, 11 January, e-health system 'suffered malfunctions', which suggests that it may have been hacked, Saeima's Social and Employment Matters Committee head Aija Barča mentioned in an interview to Latvijas Radio.

Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis, on the other hand, said that the fact of a possible hack has yet to be proven.

«Not everyone approved e-health system when it was first introduced,» said the politician, adding that the threat of a potential hack is made all the more dangerous when you take into account that the e-health system is not just for e-prescriptions and sick leave papers, because the system also compiles an enormous amount of information about all of Latvia's residents.

Barča said the hack of the e-health system took place because it was a special attack, using holes in the system's security. The member of the parliament did not say if the attack was performed by local or foreign hackers.

As the official responsible for healthcare, has been informed of the situation. Law enforcement authorities have commenced an investigation, said Barča.

Kučinskis, however, told Rīta panorama that security services have completed their investigation and reports of a hack were not confirmed in the end.

The prime minister said that suspicions were raised not in relation to data theft, but rather in relation to an attempt to interfere with the system's function. «It is hard for me to comment,» said the politician, adding that the system will continue working.

When asked if the Saeima committee has plans to request 'heads to roll' for the unsuccessful e-health system, Barča mentioned that the upcoming meeting may turn out troubling, but she is reluctant to speculate on potential outcome. The politician categorically denies the possibility of shutting down e-health system.

Kučinskis, however, said he does not feel any major need for a witch hunt, adding that the main objective is introducing the system, not focusing on other aspects.

Last week, members of the committee voiced rather critical opinions about e-health system. For example Andris Bērziņš said he does not agree with the prime minister's opinion and believes it is important to focus more on the reasons why this situation has appeared. According to him, e-health system cost a lot of money, which is why there is a good reason to demand responsibility. If this whole affair is left without any supervision, the same thing could happen in the future, said the deputy.

Politician Silvija Šimfa also emphasized that it is necessary to view this matter in a strict and clear way. She was also shocked about the way e-health was introduced, because consultations

with physicians around the world are performed using the internet, while Latvia «still uses prescriptions as if it were the Stone Age». Šimfa said that Latvia is proud of its accomplishments in IT sector. Still, introduction of e-health system was performed with all kinds of mistakes, she said.

Deputy Andrejs Klementjevs mentioned multiple times during the committee's meeting that it is highly important to evaluate the responsibility of those who coordinated the project. The parliamentarian said – if considerable finances were invested in the project, it is important to know who is responsible for mistakes. He added that it would be worth involving representatives from the Prosecutor General's Office as well.

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