



Medical practitioners back 'competent' Dzulkefly as health minister

A specialist in public health medicine says Dzulkefly Ahmad should shift the health service's focus towards preventive care.

[Predeep Nambiar](#) - 12 Dec 2023, 3:16pm



Dzulkefly Ahmad was health minister from 2018 to 2020 during the Pakatan Harapan administration.

PETALING JAYA: An academic has hailed Dzulkefly Ahmad's reappointment as health minister, expecting him to play a pivotal role in carrying out necessary reforms within the ministry.

A three-term Kuala Selangor MP who was health minister from 2018 to 2020 during the Pakatan Harapan administration, Dzulkefly also chairs the parliamentary select committee on health.

"I'm glad that we have a competent health minister to tackle the major issues," Universiti Malaya's Dr Tharani Loganathan told FMT.

“Although potentially divisive, health reforms are necessary. We need a smart, savvy politician at the helm when introducing changes.”

Tharani also said Dzulkefly’s priority should be to find a definitive solution on the issue of contract doctors in the health service and shifting the health service’s focus towards preventive care instead of the curative care approach presently used.

She said rather than spending mainly on curative hospital care, the government should invest in the prevention and management of chronic diseases like diabetes and cancer.

“It works out as better value than only investing in curative hospital care,” she said.

Meanwhile, Federation of Private Medical Practitioners’ Association founding chairman Dr Steven Chow voiced hope that the new minister would engage the grassroots and hear their views.

“There are important experiences that are relevant from his previous tenure as minister,” he said.

Dr Choong Sim Poey of the Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia said Dzulkefly should look into the country’s high teenage pregnancy rates which he said could be effectively reduced through comprehensive sex education in schools.

“The health ministry should consider sex education as a health issue, not a moral issue,” he said.

Adding that Dzulkefly should work with education departments on the matter, he said “shotgun marriages are not a solution”.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) congratulated Dzulkefly on returning to his old portfolio and praised him for his willingness to listen to the views of experts and hold regular engagements with stakeholders on policy decisions.

“With his proven track record, experience and strong leadership qualities, we believe he is well-equipped to address the complex issues and challenges within the healthcare system,” MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said in a statement.

Galen Centre for Health and Social Policy CEO Azrul Khalib also welcomed Dzulkefly’s appointment but said he would face some headwinds given the public cynicism towards the public health service.

He said Dzulkefly should focus on getting the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health 2023 Bill passed in the Dewan Negara. Passed in the Dewan Rakyat on Nov 30, the bill seeks to ban the sale and purchase of tobacco products, smoking materials, tobacco substitute products, or the provision of any service for smoking to minors.

“Somehow, this past year has seen the government being labelled as pro-tobacco and pro-vape industry, with many compromises and the eroding of Malaysia’s obligations under the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control,” Azrul said in a statement.

“The incoming minister needs to immediately act to repair the damage to Malaysia’s reputation.”