



# MMA fears lack of accountability in expanding health officers' powers

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**The Malaysian Medical Association urges the government to reconsider proposed amendments to the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act.**



*MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said the association is prepared to work with the government to develop a more balanced and effective approach to managing infectious diseases. (MMA pic)*

## **PETALING JAYA:**

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has voiced concern that the government's proposed amendments to the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 (Act 342) could lead to a lack of accountability among authorised officers.

In a statement, MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said the amendments to Act 342 posed a significant risk of misuse by the authorities and called for the government to reconsider them.

The proposed changes include increasing the maximum compound fine from RM1,000 to RM5,000, requiring individuals suspected of infection or close contact to wear tracking devices, and significantly expanding the powers of the health director-general during a public health emergency.

The proposed increase in fine is excessive and could disproportionately affect lower-income groups, she said.

The use of tracking devices for infected individuals, while potentially useful for disease control, must be balanced with robust privacy protections and clear limitations on data use.

The amendments to Act 342 were tabled for a first reading in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. This is the second attempt to amend the law, after the first bid was withdrawn by then prime minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob in March 2022.

Acknowledging a need for updated public health emergency legislation, Azizan nevertheless called for a more balanced approach to ensure the best interests of both public health and individual rights.

Apart from the use of punitive measures, she proposed a focus on public health education and ensuring the fair enforcement of regulations to avoid double standards.

We propose the inclusion of provisions for financial and social support for those affected by quarantine or isolation measures, particularly for lower-income individuals, she said.

Azizan also said that healthcare infrastructure must be strengthened to better respond to infectious diseases as opposed to a primary reliance on penalties.

The MMA stands ready to work with the government to develop a more balanced and effective approach to managing infectious diseases, she said.

We believe public health measures should be based on scientific evidence, respect for individual rights, and consideration of socioeconomic factors.