

MMA supports establishment of designated smoking areas

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The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) supports the establishment of designated smoking areas (DSAs) as currently being considered by the Ministry of Health (MOH). - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) supports the establishment of designated smoking areas (DSAs) as currently being considered by the Ministry of Health (MOH).

MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz in a statement today however said that it must be carefully planned and executed.

"Considering the implementation of DSAs was by no means a U-turn in policy by the Health Ministry. We believe the ministry remains firm in its stand against smoking.

"We agree, if properly executed, DSAs have the potential to contribute to the gradual denormalisation of smoking – a viewpoint the MMA shares with the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM).

Dr Azizan said for effective implementation, the Health Ministry would need to work together with the municipal councils and premise owners to identify suitable locations for DSAs.

Public health, he said, must remain the highest priority in these decisions, not the convenience of shop owners and smokers.

He added DSAs should be situated outdoors and away from crowded areas to prevent exposure of non-smokers to secondhand smoke.

"Looking ahead, we recommend that the Ministry of Health (MOH) examine the implementation of DSAs in countries like Singapore and Japan to gather insights and best practices," he said.