

## Dzul did the right thing, say medical experts

NATION

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PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry made the right decision in warning the public over the rising Covid-19 infections, say experts in backing Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said the Health Minister did the right thing by allaying public concerns over the increase in Covid-19 cases.

“Reporting the number of cases is a responsible thing to do.

“The Health Ministry should be commended instead for its transparency and handling of the situation,” she said yesterday.

The MMA was asked to respond to remarks by Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, who in a statement earlier yesterday, called out Dzulkefly for “causing undue public alarm” in his announcement on the Covid-19 situation.

Tiong said Dzulkefly should have considered the effects on the country’s economic and tourism, adding that reporting of daily Covid-19 cases could create “unreasonable fear and public anxiety.”

On Dec 18, Dzulkefly held a press conference to address the rising number of Covid-19 infections nationwide and said Malaysia was not considering reactivating the movement control order.

He said the Health Ministry had prepared a five-point strategy to deal with the recent increase in Covid-19 cases in the country.

Dr Azizan said there were currently no restrictions on tourists coming to Malaysia although, as done in many other countries, precautions were being taken, which included stepping up surveillance efforts.

“In fact, Malaysia taking precautions is what tourists would want to hear so they feel safe.

“Cases of Covid-19 are on the rise globally, not just in Malaysia. Even Indonesia is on high alert as reported on Dec 12.

“Malaysia has not shut its doors to tourists, so if there is a drop in tourism, it could be due to other reasons,” she added.

Public health medicine specialist Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar also shared the same views, saying that Dzulkefly as the Health Minister had done the right thing.

“Covid-19 is on the rise worldwide. He informed the public about the matter and what the government plans to do, and gave the right advice for the public.

“The public were given informed choices in terms of vaccination and preventive measures. It was a noble thing to do,” said Dr Zainal Ariffin.

He also believed that Dzulkefly was not overreacting in his announcement as he even mentioned that the MCO was not part of the strategy.

However, Federation of Private Medical Practitioners’ Associations Malaysia president Dr Shanmuganathan Ganeson said Dzulkefly could have highlighted that the current strain was no cause for alarm, rather than play up the increase.

“Reports of infection tend to cause a lingering effect on tourist decisions, and when the surge abates, the perception of infection will dent arrivals long after.”