

Fight misinformation among Malays about booster jabs, says ex-minister

By **Samuel Chua** - February 20, 2022 8:45 AM

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It was recently reported that less than half the Malay community had received booster jabs. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: A former health minister has proposed that the government seek the help of experts and religious authorities to increase the uptake of Covid-19 booster jabs among the Malays.

Dzulkefly Ahmad said these experts and religious bodies could help by disseminating accurate information on booster shots.

Commenting on reports on the low uptake of booster doses among the Malays, Dzulkefly said the problem lay in misinformation linked to adverse effects such as myocarditis, pericarditis and blood clots or embolisms.

Earlier this week, it was reported that fewer than half of Malays (47.9%) had received their booster jabs. In comparison, 81.3% of Chinese, 56.4% of Indians, and 49.6% of Orang Asli and other Bumiputeras have completed their third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine as of Feb 10.

Dzulkefly said the government could also give incentives to the Malay community to take booster doses or deny those without booster shots access to crowded places, confined spaces and situations that require close conversations.

When asked why vaccination rates were higher among the Chinese and Indian communities, Dzulkefly said it could be down to a lower reliance on family members and social media for information on the vaccines.



Dzulkefly Ahmad.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai said the government should pinpoint areas where there is a low uptake for booster shots and make the necessary improvements.

“If the uptake is low among Malays in rural areas, the government will need to use the health ministry’s machinery to reach out to the people there. There are health services even in the most remote of regions,” he said.

Koh said the health and communications and multimedia ministries should step up efforts to combat fake news on booster shots, with frequent messaging on the benefits of booster doses backed by scientific evidence.



Dr Koh Kar Chai.

“Many patients at our clinics seem to be misinformed about boosters. Many are getting their information from unreliable sources.

“Those who think they have sufficient protection against Covid-19 with two doses should also be reminded that it is still possible for fully vaccinated individuals to contract long Covid where symptoms can be prolonged,” he said