

KERATAN AKHBAR

NAMA AKHBAR: NEW STRAITS TIMES (NEWS)

TARIKH: 31 DISEMBER 2019

MUKA SURAT: 02

Ministry, agencies to conduct regular checks

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry and other government agencies are expected to conduct random and regular checks to ensure restaurant operators and patrons comply with the smoking ban at eateries.

Deputy Health Minister Dr Lee Boon Chye said preliminary checks by the ministry showed that all states were ready to implement the new regulation, which will be fully enforced from tomorrow.

All state governments, including local authorities, he said, had been briefed on the standard operating procedure and processes related to the issuing of compounds against errant restaurant

operators and patrons.

"The briefing to the states include the collection of exhibits (evidence), such as tobacco products, vape liquids and tobacco shisha," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Dr Lee was asked to comment if the ministry would carry out integrated operations with local authorities as well as the police to ensure that operators and patrons of eateries comply with the smoking ban.

After a year of educating the public and creating greater awareness, the smoking ban is set to come into full effect from tomorrow.

During the education period,

Dr Lee said, the ministry had conducted promotions and announcements on the ban to the public at the state level through various channels, as well as with the assistance of non-governmental organisations.

Dr Lee urged restaurant operators to do their part in helping the ministry to ensure that the public adhere to the smoking ban.

"Apart from displaying the no-smoking sign, restaurant operators should encourage their customers to comply with the smoking ban by not placing or providing ashtrays at their premises."

It was previously reported

that the Housing and Local Government Ministry had urged local authorities to help the Health Ministry enforce the ban.

Its minister, Zuraida Kamarudin, had said the ministry would request local authorities nationwide to identify suitable locations to be turned into smoking zones following the full enforcement of the ban.

Meanwhile, smokers advocacy group Persatuan Kesedaran Perokok has urged the Health Ministry to extend the moratorium on the smoking ban until June.

Its chairman, Mohd Hanizam Yunus, said the appeal for the extension was submitted through a letter of application from their lawyer, Mohamed Haniff Khatri Abdulla, to Health Minister

Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad on Dec 24.

"However, we have yet to receive any response. We hope that the minister can consider this appeal."

"This is because the Kuala Lumpur High Court has rejected the application for judicial review, leading us to appeal to the Court of Appeal with case management set for Jan 17," he said in a statement yesterday.

Hanizam said the moratorium, slated to end today, should be extended to enable the Court of Appeal to resolve all processes and current proceedings.

"This is to prevent prejudice against all parties, be it the ministry or the smokers," he added.

On Feb 28, Hanizam and six others, calling themselves sup-

porters of the "Smokers Rights Club", filed a judicial review application, naming the Health Ministry as the sole respondent.

In their application, they claimed the smoking ban contradicts the Federal Constitution as smoking was not a criminal activity and was not banned in the country.

On Oct 29, the High Court upheld the smoking ban in all eateries, saying that the ban did not breach the people's rights to liberty and equality.

Judge Datuk Seri Mariana Yahya said the respondent (Health Ministry) had taken into account public interest factors in enforcing the ban to protect the public, including infants, from the danger of smoke from cigarettes.