

KERATAN AKHBAR

NAMA AKHBAR: THE SUN (NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS)

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SPEAK OUT ... Health minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad engaging passengers on a KTM train in Kuala Lumpur yesterday in conjunction with 'Speak Out: Express Your Right' campaign 2020 - 2025, which encourages non-smokers to voice their rights for a smoke-free environment. —BERNAMAPIX

'Provide smoking areas'

➤ Designated place should be covered and away from premises, says Zuraida

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PUTRAJAYA: The Housing and Local Government Ministry is encouraging restaurants and eateries to provide designated covered smoking areas outside their premises for smokers' convenience.

Its minister, Zuraida Kamaruddin, said those interested could contact their respective local councils, which would facilitate the construction of the smoking area, based on the given guidelines.

This is despite efforts by the Health Ministry to reduce the number of smokers in the country, including implementing the smoking ban at all eateries, that came into force beginning January 2019.

"We want to satisfy the smokers' needs' too, to show the government is concerned

about their plight as they are also paying taxes. We want to provide this facility so they will be more willing to accept the no-smoking policy.

"If the restaurant owners are concerned about a decline in customers, then they are encouraged to invest in a smoking area outside their premises," she said yesterday.

However, Zuraida said the designated smoking area, which can either be covered by a roof or canopy, should be built three metres from the premises, in line with the Health Ministry's regulation.

In addition, restaurant owners should provide ashtrays, maintain the cleanliness of the area and put up a "Smoking Area" sign, as well as ensure food or drinks are not served in the area.

Her statement comes two days after Deputy Health Minister Dr Lee Boon Chye said eateries were not allowed to provide designated smoking areas within three metres of the premises, and that anything outside the business operation area would fall under the purview of the respective local authorities.

Zuraida said the ministry would allocate RM1 million for local councils to provide

covered smoking areas that are suitable.

"We have launched one model at Ampang Point, which has two sheltered smoking booths with seating areas and ashtrays. Other local councils can apply to the ministry to have similar smoking areas in their constituencies."

Zuraida said each smoking area would cost about RM5,000, adding that the ministry would seek additional funding from the Finance Ministry if the demand for smoking areas in common public spots was high.

Meanwhile, the Consumers' Association of Penang in commending the government's move to introduce the smoking ban at eateries, has urged the Health Ministry to continue with its unannounced raids and monitoring at food outlets.

It also proposed that the government consider introducing community service orders requiring offenders to clean public areas for up to 12 hours, apart from the current compound of between RM250 and RM350.

"The Australian Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research study in 2013 showed that community service orders are 'more effective than other kinds of punishment,'" it said.