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Govt beefs up healthcare by another RM200 mln, but rakyat's efforts also key to break infection

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 22 – Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz today assured that the government is beefing up the country's healthcare needs with the latest funding of RM200 million, but Malaysians' collective efforts are also critical to break the infection rate in the country.

With an additional allocation of RM200 million this year, the allocation to address COVID-19 to public health has increased to RM1 billion.

In addition, a total of RM5 billion was allocated to help purchase vaccines and speed up the implementation of vaccinations so that Malaysia is now one of the fastest in the region.

"Previously, the vaccination rate was around 30,000 to 40,000 injections a day and now it has reached 76,000. It will continue to increase from July in line with the vaccine supply schedule," he said in a press conference here today.

According to Tengku Zafrul, with the increase in COVID-19 cases, more allocations will be given to increase the

capacity of intensive care units and beds in Ministry of Health hospitals, University Teaching Hospitals as well as provide MINDEF field hospitals.

"Provisions will also be increased to upgrade equipment, medicines and related consumables and the appointment of medical officers on contract basis, including retirees," he said.

For the above purpose, Tengku Zafrul said the Ministry of Finance (MoF) had approved an additional allocation of RM200 million and his ministry would continue to monitor the situation and was committed to providing adequate allocation to curb COVID-19.

"The government is committed to ensuring adequate allocation for public health and the survival of the affected groups, while it is also important for MCO 3.0 as a 'circuit breaker' to reduce the burden on the national health system," he said.

According to Tengku Zafrul, not only Malaysia, but other countries worldwide are also experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases since early 2021 with various new variants.

"Therefore, a total lockdown is not a way to break the chain of infection because it will impact the people, especially the vulnerable groups," he said.

According to him, the impact of a comprehensive Movement Control Order (MCO) will be felt more by the low-income group and informal sector workers.

Although MCO 3.0 would involve stricter standard operating procedures (SOPs), he said various targeted assistance would be continued to help affected individuals and businesses.

Among the existing assistance channelled by the government are the prihatin rakyat assistance of RM4.48 billion so far and wage subsidies involving 2.72 million workers.

On the business side, he said government assistance included Bank Negara Malaysia's fund for small and medium enterprises of RM5.2 billion, the PRIHATIN guarantee scheme of RM39 billion and wage subsidies involving 330,358 employers.

The government and the Employees Provident Fund have also facilitated withdrawals through i-Sinar and i-Lestari amounting to RM78 billion so far.

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