

Headline	Stop fish spas till ministry comes up with finding Dr Zulkifli		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (Kuching)		
Date	21 Oct 2011	Color	Black/white
Section	Home	Circulation	88,150
Page No	5	Readership	166,173
Language	English	ArticleSize	218 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 1,255
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 3,765



Stop fish spas till ministry comes up with finding – Dr Zulkifli

KUCHING: State health director Dr Zulkifli Jantan has advised the public against using fish spas pending a formal ruling by the Ministry of Health (MoH) on the safety of such service.

He also advised providers of such spas to discontinue the service.

According to him, any decision or action to be taken by the ministry would depend on a study it is conducting now.

“They will need to study all the records available. MoH will issue a statement and guidelines, so wait for a statement by the ministry,” Dr Zulkifli said when contacted by The Borneo Post yesterday.

Dr Zulkifli was asked to comment on a warning from Britain's Health Protection Agency (HPA) that fish spas, where people let dozens of tiny fish nibble the dead skin off from their feet, could spread blood-borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C.

HPA said while the pampering carried a “very low” risk for healthy clients, those with conditions including diabetes and psoriasis were advised against it.

It said infections could be transmitted either from fish to person, via the nibbling process, water to person, or person to person.

When contacted, state director of Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Wan Ahmad Uzir Wan Sulaiman warned fish spa operators that that they could be prosecuted if their fish spas were found to spread diseases.

“As far as my ministry is concerned, we can charge the operators under the Consumer Protection Act. We have no problem either to have joint enforcement or assist the Ministry of

Health in enforcing the law if we are required to do so,” he said.

Wan Ahmad Uzir thus advised users to take it upon themselves to determine the safety of the fish spas.

“They cannot just rely on the enforcement officers due to the limited manpower that we have,” he added.

A fish spa operator here, when contacted, said she was unaware of the news and would ask her staff to stop the service immediately.

“We are just providing this service free to our customers as an additional service,” she said.

Another wellness centre operator said his centre used to provide fish spa service to customers but had stopped more than a year ago due to the difficulty in maintaining the fishes.

Members of the public, when approached, also raised concerns over the safety of using fish spa.

“The infection as a result of using fish spa is possible because they might have changed the water but not the fish and the virus will still be active.

“If the person has a cut or if the person lets the fish bite on the injured area, that person might be infected,” said an entrepreneur who requested anonymity.

Another individual advised those with infectious diseases to be more responsible by not using fish spa so that they will not spread the diseases to other people.

He also hoped that fish spa operators would be more responsible in ensuring that the service they provide is safe.

“Of course, the operators might not know whether their customers are infected with HIV or Hepatitis C or not, so please be more responsible for the sake of customers,” he said.