

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Tepung gandum wajib diperkaya zat besi, asid folik

Pelaksanaan secara mandatori bagi pek 25kg ke bawah sebagai intervensi kesihatan awam

Oleh Rafidah Mat Ruzki
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Putrajaya: Kerajaan akan melaksanakan fortifikasi tepung gandum dengan zat besi dan asid folik bagi pek 25 kilogram dan ke bawah, secara mandatori sebagai intervensi kesihatan awam bagi meningkatkan pengambilan zat besi dan asid folik dalam kalangan rakyat negara ini.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata cadangan itu dipersetujui Jemaah Menteri dalam Mesyuarat Kabinet pada 20 April lalu.

Beliau berkata, cadangan fortifikasi itu akan memastikan paras zat besi dan asid folik dalam tepung gandum adalah selaras dengan cadangan Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) iaitu 6.0 miligram (mg) bagi zat besi dan 260 mikrogram (µg) bagi asid folik dalam setiap 100 gram (g) tepung gandum.

Katanya, cadangan fortifikasi secara mandatori itu akan memastikan paras zat besi dan asid folik dalam tepung gandum 25 kg dan ke bawah adalah seragam.

Ia berikutan, kekurangan zat besi dan asid folik boleh menyebabkan masalah kecacatan kekal dalam kalangan bayi seperti Ne-

ural Tube Defect (NTD) dan Anemia.

"Pada masa ini, secara umumnya zat besi dan asid folik tidak ditambah ke dalam tepung gandum pek 25 kilogram (kg).

"Kedua-duanya hanya ditambah ke dalam tepung gandum pek 1 kilogram (kg) secara sukarela, dengan paras yang berbeza-beza, dan lebih rendah berbanding paras yang dicadangkan," katanya dalam kenyataan media, semalam.

Khairy berkata, NTD adalah masalah pembentukan dan tumesaran saraf bayi semasa dalam kandungan yang boleh menyebabkan bayi dilahirkan dengan tempurung kepala yang tidak lengkap (anencephaly), tumesaran otak yang terencat dan pembentukan tulang belakang yang tidak sempurna (spina bifida).

Beliau berkata, ia seterusnya meningkatkan kos rehabilitasi dan pengurusan pesakit, mengurangkan kualiti kehidupan dan boleh menyebabkan kematian.

Katanya, anemia pula adalah keadaan kepekatan hemoglobin (Hb) dalam sel darah merah adalah rendah dan boleh mengakibatkan kelahiran pra-matang dan menjejaskan perkembangan mental, fizikal dan kognitif yang seterusnya akan menyebabkan masalah kurang berat lahir dan terbantut.

"Berdasarkan Tinjauan Kesihatan dan Morbiditi Kebangsaan 2019, satu daripada lima (21.3 peratus) rakyat Malaysia mengalami masalah anemia dan secara khususnya, tiga daripada 10 (29.9 peratus) wanita usia reproduktif yang berusia antara 15 hingga 49 tahun, mengalami masalah anemia.

"Pelaksanaan fortifikasi zat besi dan asid folik secara manda-

Fortifikasi tepung gandum menggalakan pengambilan zat besi dan asid folik dalam kalangan rakyat negara ini.
(Foto hiasan)



“Cadangan fortifikasi secara mandatori itu akan memastikan paras zat besi dan asid folik dalam tepung gandum 25kg dan ke bawah adalah seragam”

Khairy Jamaluddin,
Menteri Kesihatan



tori dalam tepung gandum ini juga dapat meningkatkan kualiti nutrien produk makanan yang dihasilkan oleh industri makanan kecil dan sederhana seperti roti, mee basah, roti canai, dan kuih-muih yang, sekali gus membuka ruang yang lebih luas bagi rakyat Malaysia untuk mendapat akses kepada makanan berkhasiat di pasaran.

"Ini diharap dapat meningkatkan status pemakanan dan kesihatan rakyat Malaysia," katanya.

Justeru, Khairy berkata, Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) akan mengadakan perbincangan lebih lanjut bersama pemegang taruh berkaitan agar melalui pelaksanaan itu, ia bukan hanya memberi faedah kepada kesihatan tetapi juga tidak akan membebankan rakyat dari segi harga.

Beliau berkata, pada masa sama, KKM akan meminda Peraturan-Peraturan Makanan 1985 bagi pelaksanaan fortifikasi itu.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Kadar golongan muda hidap kanser payudara kian membimbangkan

Pengesanan, rawatan awal pada tahap satu, dua mempunyai kadar sembuh tinggi

Oleh Mahani Ishak
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Statistik Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) pada Februari lalu mendedahkan seorang daripada sembilan wanita di negara ini berkemungkinan menghidap penyakit kanser.

Daripada kalangan wanita itu 33.9 peratus menghidap kanser payudara, kanser kolorektal (10.7 peratus) dan kanser serviks (6.2 peratus).

Pakar Perunding Onkologi Klinikal Pusat Perubatan Sunway, Bandar Sunway, Dr Aqilah Othman, berkata keadaan itu semakin membimbangkan berikutan trend penghidap kanser payudara sudah berubah apabila lebih ramai wanita bawah 40 tahun didiagnosis menghidap kanser.

"Pada masa sekarang, ramai wanita bawah usia 40 tahun didapati menghidap kanser payudara dan angka itu kian meningkat tanpa kita tahu penyebabnya. Begitu juga dengan pesakit wanita yang menghidap kanser kolorektal atau kanser usus.

"Secara umumnya, sekarang ini ramai pesakit berusia antara 20 dan 40 tahun sudah didiagnosis kanser, malah ada pesakit saya menghidap kanser payudara walaupun beliau baru berusia awal 20-an," katanya kepada BH ketika diminta berkongsi pengalamannya merawat pesakit kanser dalam kalangan usia muda.

Buat pertimbangan beri rawatan kepada pesakit muda

Katanya, beberapa pertimbangan perlu dibuat dalam memberikan rawatan kepada pesakit muda berhubung perkara berkaitan fertiliti atau kesuburan, terutama hal yang membabitkan perancangan memiliki zuriat.

"Meskipun kaedah rawatan kanser payudara ini lebih kurang sama seperti kemoterapi dan radioterapi, tetapi bagi pesakit muda kita perlu lihat sama ada sudah mempunyai zuriat atau tidak, merancang untuk

menambah zuriat dan lain-lain. "Jadi rawatan mereka perlu ditukar dengan kaedah lain bagi memelihara kesuburan dan jika perlu mereka dirujuk kepada pakar kesuburan," katanya.

Bagaimanapun, katanya rawatan secara tertumpu (targeted treatment) akan dipertimbangkan selain akan terus memberikan rawatan susulan, terutama bagi kes berkaitan genetik untuk memastikan sel kanser itu tidak kembali menyerang.

"Malah untuk rawatan susulan pun mungkin berbeza antara pesakit muda dan berusia, kerana rawatan perlu disesuaikan mengikut usia, tahap kanser, kebarangkalian berulang dan lain-lain faktor.

Meskipun kaedah rawatan kanser payudara ini lebih kurang sama seperti kemoterapi dan radioterapi, tetapi bagi pesakit muda kita perlu lihat sama ada sudah mempunyai zuriat atau tidak, merancang menambah zuriat dan lain-lain

Dr Aqilah Othman,
Pakar Perunding Onkologi Klinikal
Pusat Perubatan Sunway,
Bandar Sunway

"Jadi dalam hal ini, kita perlu lihat ciri kanser itu sendiri kerana setiap orang adalah berbeza, rawatan optimum untuk kanser itu dan tahap ketahanan pesakit" katanya.

Golongan muda lambat didiagnosis

Katanya, trend membimbangkan apabila golongan muda lambat didiagnosis berikutan faktor usia mereka membuatkan mereka tampi mendapatkan rawatan selepas berada dalam tahap yang lebih serius.

"Kebiasaannya gejala mereka ini adalah sama iaitu ada benjolan pada payudara yang mana sukar untuk dikesan jika hanya dengan memeriksa sendiri pada tahap awal kerana jika boleh dirasa sendiri, ia biasanya dianggarkan sudah berukuran lebih daripada 1.5 hingga 2.0 sentimeter.

"Ini berbeza dengan wanita berusia lebih 40-an yang biasa melakukan ujian saringan mamogram di mana ia boleh dikesan awal sebelum ia membesar sehingga boleh dirasa sendiri walaupun saiznya kecil.

"Pengesanan dan rawatan awal pada tahap satu dan dua mempunyai kadar kesembuhan yang tinggi," katanya sambil menjelaskan keadaan payudara ada kalanya akan menunjukkan perubahan kulit seperti tertarik ke dalam, kemerahan atau berbiji, bentuk payudara berbeza dan lain-lain.



Kongsi pengalaman rawat pesakit kanser payudara

Dalam pada itu, Dr Aqilah berkongsi pengalamannya merawat salah seorang pesakitnya yang didiagnosis pada umur pertengahan 20-an yang mulanya tidak yakin untuk menjalani rawatan kerana keluarga dan kawan lebih mendorongnya untuk menukar cara pemakanan dan juga mencuba kaedah urutan dengan harapan kansernya sembuh sendiri.

"Gadis itu seperti kebanyakan wanita lain, takut menjalani rawatan, namun selepas empat minggu mengubah corak pemakanan, beliau kembali ke hospital untuk melakukan imbasan dan ketika itu dapat dikesan sel kansernya semakin membesar.

"Melihat kepada betapa cepat kanser itu membesar, beliau bersetuju untuk menjalani

kemoterapi dan selepas selesai satu kitaran rawatan secara tertumpu (targeted treatment), dalam masa tiga minggu sahaja, benjolan payudaranya sudah mengecil. Setelah selesai rawatan kemoterapi, prosedur pembedahan dijalankan.

"Ketika dalam rawatan, saya menasihatkannya supaya bersenam dan juga meneruskan aktiviti seharian seperti biasa sebanyak mungkin. Kesan sampingan daripada kemoterapi, beliau kehilangan rambut dan saya meyakinkannya bahawa ia adalah kesan sementara," katanya.

Lebih membanggakan, Dr Aqilah berkata, beliau berjaya menjadikan hobi menjahitnya sebagai satu bentuk perniagaan dan mengusahakan jualan turban di media sosial, satu inspirasi sebagai pesakit kanser payudara.

"Keluarga yang sebelum ini kurang bersetuju dengannya untuk melakukan rawatan mula memberikan sokongan penuh kerana anak mereka kini hidup dengan lebih positif, sihat dan bebas daripada kanser disebabkan persetujuannya mengikuti saranan doktor.

"Kisah ini antara pengalaman saya menangan pesakit kerana bagi saya doktor tidak boleh memaksa pesakit. Saya hormat pendirian mereka dan akan memberitahu apa pilihan mereka untuk bertahan, jangkaan hayat serta menceritakan pengalaman pesakit lain. Keputusan untuk membuat rawatan harus datang daripada keinginan dan kesedaran mereka sendiri" katanya.

Turban yang diinspirasi oleh survival kanser payudara ini boleh didapati di Facebook dan Instagram [tunggudesignlab](#).



Trend penghidap kanser payudara sudah berubah apabila lebih ramai wanita bawah 40 tahun didiagnosis menghidap kanser.
(Foto hiasan)

Ubah gaya hidup lebih sihat

Sebagai doktor, Dr Aqilah cukup gembira apabila pesakit sembuh dan mereka mula mengubah gaya hidup ke arah lebih sihat dan menasihatkan semua orang untuk mengurangkan risiko kanser payudara seperti mengelakkan makanan tinggi gula, berproses dan melakukan ujian saringan awal.

Katanya, kebanyakan kekecawaan yang ada kepada pesakit muda ialah mereka mengalami tekanan sosial dan emosi yang tinggi, memikirkan kemungkinan mereka tidak hidup lama, kerisauan untuk memiliki zuriat dan banyak lagi.

"Jadi, sokongan sangat penting, terutama ketika pesakit dalam rawatan tetapi kebiasaan kesan itu dialami sementara saja, kebanyakan mengatakan mereka lebih sihat berbanding sebelum diagnosis," katanya sambil menegaskan mereka yang berada pada peringkat awal dan lebih cepat berjumpa doktor, mempunyai potensi tinggi untuk sembuh sepenuhnya.



AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : LOKAL



PETUGAS perubatan memberikan suntikan vaksin Covid-19 kepada kanak-kanak di Pusat Pemberian Vaksin Offsite Tapak Ekspo Seberang Jaya.

Kes harian turun ke paras sekitar 2,000

Kuala Lumpur: Selepas lebih tiga bulan, jangkitan harian Covid-19 dalam negara dicatatkan pada Isnin turun ke paras sekitar 2,000 dengan 2,478 kes baharu dilaporkan, menurut Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah. Kali terakhir kes harian Covid-19 merekodkan angka pada paras sekitar 2,000 adalah pada 17 Januari lalu iaitu 2,342.

Daripada jumlah itu, 98.71 peratus atau 2,446 kes adalah kategori satu dan dua manakala 32 kes atau 1.29 peratus adalah kategori tiga, empat dan lima.

"Daripada keseluruhan 32 kes kategori tiga, empat dan lima, 16 kes tidak divaksin atau belum lengkap vaksinasi, 10 kes telah menerima dua dos vaksin Covid-19 te-

tapi belum menerima dos penggalak manakala enam kes sudah menerima dos penggalak.

"Daripada jumlah itu (kategori tiga, empat dan lima), 18 kes berusia 60 tahun dan ke atas manakala 19 kes mempunyai komorbid," katanya.

Selain itu, beliau memaklumkan sebanyak 143 kes dimasukkan ke hospital dengan 76 kes adalah kategori satu dan dua manakala 67 kes adalah kategori tiga, empat dan lima.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata pertambahan kes baharu itu menjadikan kumulatif kes Covid-19 dalam negara kini adalah 4,433,551; manakala jumlah kes sembuh pula adalah 9,215 menjadikan kumulatif kes sembuh kini sebanyak 4,330,037.

Usaha tingkat pengambilan zat besi, asid folik masyarakat

Putrajaya: Kerajaan bakal melaksanakan penambahan tepung gandum dengan kandungan zat besi dan asid folik bagi pek 25 kilogram dan ke bawah secara mandatori sebagai intervensi kesihatan awam.

Ini adalah usaha meningkatkan pengambilan zat besi dan asid folik dalam kalangan masyarakat.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin berkata, cadangan itu dipersetujui Jemaah Menteri dalam Mesyuarat Kabinet pada 20 April 2022 lalu.

Beliau berkata, cadangan fortifikasi itu akan memas-



Kedua-duanya hanya ditambah ke dalam tepung gandum pek 1 kilogram (kg) secara sukarela, dengan paras yang berbeza-beza"

Khairy

tikan paras zat besi dan asid folik dalam tepung gandum adalah selaras dengan cadangan Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO), iaitu 6.0 miligram (mg) bagi zat besi

dan 260 mikrogram (µg) bagi asid folik dalam setiap 100 gram (g) tepung gandum.

Katanya, cadangan fortifikasi secara mandatori itu akan memastikan paras zat besi dan asid folik dalam tepung gandum 25kg dan ke bawah adalah seragam.

Ini berikutan, kekurangan zat besi dan asid folik boleh menyebabkan masalah kecacatan kekal dalam kalangan bayi seperti *Neural Tube Defect (NTD)* dan Anemia.

"Pada masa ini, secara umumnya zat besi dan asid folik tidak ditambah ke dalam tepung gandum pek 25 kilogram (kg).

"Kedua-duanya hanya ditambah ke dalam tepung gandum pek 1 kilogram (kg) secara sukarela, dengan paras yang berbeza-beza, dan lebih rendah berbanding paras dicadangkan," katanya.

Khairy berkata, NTD adalah masalah pembentukan dan tumbesaran saraf bayi semasa dalam kandungan yang boleh menyebabkan bayi dilahirkan dengan tempurung kepala yang tidak lengkap (*anencephaly*), tumbesaran otak yang tidak sempurna (*spina bifida*).

Katanya, ia meningkatkan

kos rehabilitasi dan pengu-rusan pesakit, mengurangkan kualiti kehidupan dan boleh menyebabkan kematian.

Katanya, anemia pula adalah keadaan kepekatan hemoglobin (Hb) dalam sel darah merah adalah rendah dan boleh mengakibatkan kelahiran pra-matang dan menjejaskan perkembangan mental, fizikal dan kognitif yang seterusnya akan menyebabkan masalah kurang berat lahir dan terbantut.

"Berdasarkan Tinjauan Kesihatan dan Morbiditi Kebangsaan 2019, satu daripada lima (21.3 peratus) rakyat Malaysia mengalami

masalah anemia dan secara khususnya, tiga daripada 10 (29.9 peratus) wanita usia reproduktif yang berusia antara 15 hingga 49 tahun, mengalami masalah anemia.

"Pelaksanaan fortifikasi zat besi dan asid folik secara mandatori dalam tepung gandum ini dapat meningkatkan kualiti nutrien produk makanan yang dihasilkan industri makanan kecil dan sederhana seperti roti, mi basah, roti canai yang sekaligus membuka ruang yang lebih luas bagi rakyat Malaysia untuk mendapat akses kepada makanan berkhasiat di pasaran," katanya.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NATION/NEWS

25KG PACKS

Iron, folic acid fortification for wheat flour to be made mandatory

KUALA LUMPUR: Iron and folic acid fortification will be made mandatory in 25kg packs of wheat flour, the Health Ministry announced yesterday.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the requirement, which was given the green light by cabinet ministers, was in line with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendation.

The recommendation, he said, was to ensure that the level of iron and folic acid were at 6mg and 260 micrograms, respectively, in every 100g of wheat flour.

"Currently, iron and folic acid are not added to a 25kg pack of wheat flour. Both are added to a

1kg pack of wheat flour voluntarily (by manufacturers) with varying levels (of content), lower than the recommended levels.

"This proposal will ensure that the iron and folic acid levels in wheat flour of 25kg packs and below are standardised," he said yesterday.

Iron and folic acid deficiency may lead to anaemia and permanent disabilities in infants, such as neural tube defect (NTD).

"Anaemia is a condition where the concentration of haemoglobin in red blood cells is low.

"It may result in premature birth and could affect mental, physical and cognitive develop-

ment, which in turn would lead to birth weight problems and stunted growth."

Khairy said the 2019 National Health and Morbidity survey showed that every one in five Malaysians suffered from anaemia.

"In particular, three out of 10 women of reproductive age between 15 and 49 years old suffer from this condition.

"This proposal is one of the effective and comprehensive public health interventions to increase iron and folic acid intake within the community," he said.

As for NTD, he said, it could affect the formation and growth

of a baby's nervous system while they were in the womb.

"NTD could cause the baby to be born with an incomplete skull (anencephaly) or stunted brain and lead to the formation of an imperfect spine (spina bifida).

"These would lead to a high cost in rehabilitation and patient management, affect the quality of life and could even lead to loss of life."

Making it compulsory that wheat flour was fortified with iron and folic acid could improve the quality of the food product, he added.

"It will improve the quality in terms of nutrients produced by

small and medium food industry, such as bread, wet noodles, *roti canai* and cakes.

"It will also open up better access to nutritious food in the market for Malaysians."

He said the ministry would hold further discussions with stakeholders to ensure that the implementation, while having health benefits, would not burden consumers in terms of price.

"At the same time, the ministry will amend the Food Regulation Act 1985 in light of this implementation.

"It is hoped that this will improve the nutritional intake and general health of Malaysians."

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS / NATION

8 DEATHS ON MONDAY

New Covid-19 cases drop to 2,478

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia logged 2,478 Covid-19 cases on Monday, a further decrease from the 4,006 reported on Sunday.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said

the total cumulative cases was now 4,433,551 since the coronavirus hit in early 2020.

He said currently there were 68,008 active Covid-19 cases, with its infectivity rate at 0.78.

He, however, continued cautioning the public not to be complacent, as there is a slight increase in cases of patients requiring respiratory assistance.

"A total of 98 of the cases reported yesterday (Monday) are receiving treatment at the intensive care units (ICU). There are 63 patients ventilated, a slight increase from the 61 patients reported on Sunday.

"Another 98.71 per cent (2,446 cases) from the total cases reported are patients under Category 1 and 2. The remaining 1.29 per cent (32 cases) are under Category 3, 4 and 5.

"Out of the 32 patients, 16 of them were either unvaccinated or

partially vaccinated, 10 were vaccinated with no booster shots and the remaining six were vaccinated with booster shots," he said in a statement yesterday.



Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

On hospital admissions, Dr Noor Hisham said there were 143 patients admitted on Monday, with 76 of them from Category 3, 4 and 5 and the remaining 67 in Category 1 and 2.

"Eighteen per cent of 10,272 Covid-19 normal beds were utilised yesterday (Monday), an in-

crease of two per cent compared with 16 per cent utilisation reported on Sunday.

"A total of 13 per cent out of 752 ICU beds are utilised and Covid-

19 PKRC bed occupancy remained with two per cent of 5,566 beds utilised."

He said 9,215 Covid-19 patients recovered on Monday, making it 4,330,037 recoveries recorded.

"Eight patients died from coronavirus yesterday (Monday), including two brought-in-dead cases reported in Melaka and Selangor.

"Overall, there were two deaths reported in Kedah, one in Melaka, and five in Selangor."

According to the Health Ministry's CovidNow data, 68.1 per cent of the adult population in the country, or 16,014,864 people, have received their booster doses up to April 24.

A total of 736,114 children aged 5 to 11 have received two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine while 1,497,935, or 42.2 per cent, of children have received one dose.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NATION

Cases in the 2,000 range

It took three months to get to this stage, says Health DG

KUALA LUMPUR: It took three months for the number of daily Covid-19 cases to drop to about 2,000, with 2,478 cases recorded on Monday, says Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

The last time the daily cases recorded a figure of around 2,000 was on Jan 17 with 2,342 cases.

The highest number of daily cases during the three-month period was on March 5 with 33,406.

Of the new cases, 98.71% or 2,446 cases fell under Categories 1 and 2 while 32 cases or 1.29% were in Categories 3, 4 and 5.

Of the 32 cases, 16 of them involved patients who were not vaccinated or had not been fully vaccinated, 10 cases involved those who had been fully vaccinated but had not received the booster dose while six others had received the booster dose.

"Eighteen of the total 32 cases are aged 60 and above while 19 have comorbidities," the Health director-general said in his daily statement.

A total of 143 cases were admitted to hospitals with 76 of them in Categories 1 and 2 while 67 were in Categories 3, 4, and 5.

The new infections bring the cumulative total to 4,433,551, which also saw a total of 4,330,037 recoveries, including 9,215 on Monday.

Dr Noor Hisham said Malaysia's infectivity rate was at 0.73 with Putrajaya recording the highest at 1.07.

Separately, a total of 736,114 children, aged between five and 11, or 20.7% of the population have completed their vaccination under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme For Children.

According to the CovidNow website, 1,497,935 children or 42.2% have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

For teenagers between 12 and 17, 2,888,431 or 92.8% have completed their vaccination while 2,987,570 or 96% have received at least one dose.

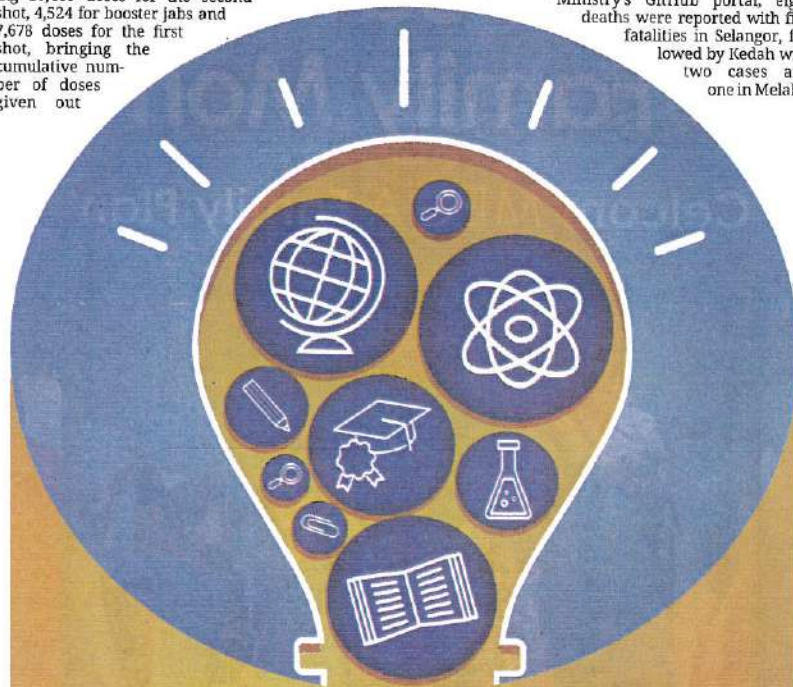
As for the adult population, a total of 16,014,864 or 68.1% have received the booster dose, 22,964,800 or 97.6% have completed both doses while 23,241,481 or 98.8% have received at least one dose.

On Monday, 38,691 doses of vaccine were administered, comprising 26,489 doses for the second shot, 4,524 for booster jabs and 7,678 doses for the first shot, bringing the cumulative number of doses given out

under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme to

70,118,091, reported Bernama.

According to the Health Ministry's GitHub portal, eight deaths were reported with five fatalities in Selangor, followed by Kedah with two cases and one in Melaka.



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Students need better mental health support

By **RAHIMY RAHIM** and **RAGANANTHINI VETHASALAM**
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PETALING JAYA: Acknowledging that higher rates of psychological distress had impacted children during the Covid-19 pandemic, better mental health support has been provided at primary and secondary school levels, said Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

The Health director-general said the ministry has taken several measures to address the issue, including strengthening the Healthy Mind Programme in schools, which is a collaboration effort with the Ministry of Education.

"At present, a total of 7,780 primary schools and 2,450 secondary schools are implementing this programme.

"The main objective of this programme is to promote good mental health, to empower the school community on self-mental health care and to identify children with men-

tal health issues for early intervention and treatment," he said recently.

Dr Noor Hisham explained that the guidelines on the implementation of the Healthy Mind Programme in the new norm and referral pathway to health facilities for mental health crisis cases in schools were also developed during the pandemic.

"School counsellors have also been trained to detect early mental health issues among children and refer them appropriately," he said.

The National Health and Morbidity Survey in 2019 found that some 424,000 children in Malaysia are struggling with mental health problems, indicating that mental health issues among the group may have become an epidemic.

Dr Noor Hisham said that, by domains, the highest prevalence were issues related to peer problems (42.9%) followed by pro-social skills (27.7%), conduct problems

(15.9%), emotional health (8.3%) and hyperactivity problems (2.3%).

"The National Health and Morbidity Survey among children has not been repeated, as such comparison data is not available post pandemic.

"However, data from the Royal Police Malaysia showed increasing suicide trends from 3% in 2019 to 6% in 2020 among those aged 15 to 18 years," he added.

The Health Ministry, he added, had provided psychosocial support helpline services, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

"Since March 2020, the ministry in collaboration with NGOs have set up helpline services to provide psychosocial support to those in need.

"The helpline psychosocial support services are being operated by counsellors and medical experts trained in the mental health field," he said.

"In 2021, from the total calls

received, approximately 2% of calls were received from those aged below 19 years old.

"Our data showed that one in five of them required emotional support due to various reasons mainly family issues, relationship conflicts, symptoms of depression and challenges in adaptation during the pandemic (PdPR)," added Dr Noor Hisham.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the health ministry also provided mental health and psychosocial support services through its teams mobilised at the state, district, hospital and health clinic levels.

"The teams consist of various categories trained in mental health - public health physicians, psychiatrists, family medicine specialists," said Dr Noor Hisham.

Aside from that the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry and Jakim also provide helpline services through Talian Kasih and KSK-Care respectively, noted Dr Noor Hisham.

AKHBAR : THE SUN

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

Health Ministry to snuff out smoking habit with new law

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry's decision to introduce a new legislation to address the smoking habit, through a strategy termed Generational Endgame (GEG), is seen by experts and activists as a timely move.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin is expected to table the proposed law in the Dewan Rakyat in July. On Feb 17, he announced that a new Act will be introduced to, among others, ban smoking and possession of tobacco products, including vape, for the generation born in and after 2005.

Khairy said the high cost of treating diseases associated with smoking was among the factors that drove the government to initiate the bold move.

Assoc Prof Dr Mohamad Haniki Nik Mohamed, who is the leader of Sustainable Smokefree Campus Community Flagship at the International Islamic University Malaysia, said GEG has what it takes to mitigate the onset of the smoking habit and use of tobacco products in a more comprehensive manner in the long run.

He said the tobacco endgame strategy is necessary as a survey in 2017 showed that 13.8% of Malaysian adolescents aged between 13 and 17 were smokers.

Mohamad Haniki, who is also president of the Malaysian Association of Adolescent Health and has been actively involved in advocating tobacco control measures, said current anti-smoking strategies have not shown to be effective in reducing the prevalence of smoking, which now stood at around 20% among adults in this country, with the number of

smokers hitting five million.

He said each year, over 20,000 Malaysians succumb to various diseases associated with smoking, particularly cardiovascular and respiratory disorders and cancer.

"The cost of treating these three disorders alone is estimated at RM3 billion (a year). Actually, there are more than 30 types of smoking-related illnesses. So, the actual treatment costs borne by the government are far higher," he added.

Universiti Putra Malaysia school of business and economics dean Assoc

Prof Dr Norashidah Mohamed Nor said the cost of treating diseases caused by smoking is expected to escalate by 40% in the next 10 years if nothing is done to reduce the number of smokers.

It was reported that in 2020 alone, the treatment costs for smoking-related illnesses totalled a hefty RM6.21 billion.

Consumers Association of Penang education officer N. V. Subbarow said the issue of smoking among children and adolescents is worsening, and he hoped there will be no delay in the tabling of the proposed law. - Bernama

■ BY IMAN MUTTAQIN
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PETALING JAYA: The Selangor Veterinary Services Department has expanded its rabies surveillance from a 1km radius to 10km, to collect brain samples from stray dogs after two cases were detected in the state. The expanded areas involve the Hulu Langat, Sepang, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya districts.

Its director, Dr Hassuzana Khalil said so far, results from the brain samples that were sent to the Veterinary Research Institute in Ipoh returned negative. She said investigations started within a 1km radius following the death of a man who was bitten by a rabid dog in the Petaling district.

"The victim died two months later after he was bitten. The department is querying his relatives and friends to ascertain if they had seen the dog that had bitten him.

"We are receiving assistance from the local authorities such as the Sepang and Kuala Langat Municipal Councils in this operation," she told *The Sun*.

Hassuzana said cooperation from residents is critical as the information provided can assist department personnel to identify dogs that show signs of aggression or illness. This will enable the department to capture the dogs for immediate diagnosis.

She also cautioned residents who neglected their pets. She said such an attitude must change as animal faeces in public places contributes to environmental pollution, nuisance and the spread of diseases. Residents are advised to spay their pets to control the animal population.

"Rabies is a zoonotic disease and is fatal since there is no specific treatment for it," Hassuzana said, adding that eliminating rabid

Selangor widens rabies surveillance

➤ Vet dept on the lookout for dog showing signs of aggression and illness following death of man

animals is an important task carried out by the authorities.

"Early diagnosis, prompt action to eliminate rabid animals and disposal of their carcasses are important measures that can be carried out to control the spread of the disease.

"However, the department always follows recommended animal disposal procedures so that animals can be euthanised humanely."

The department also affirmed that it does not intend to vaccinate stray dogs because no dog has been confirmed positive for rabies. However, Hassuzana advised pet owners to vaccinate their dogs against rabies at any veterinary clinic.

She urged residents not to panic because the reported case is isolated and to date, no other dog-bite cases have been reported.

"The department will continue to conduct campaigns to increase awareness and understanding among residents about rabies so that they will be more careful and vigilant, especially in plantations, abandoned buildings

and housing areas.

"The department also advised Selangor residents not to provoke dogs or cats because these animals tend to bite to defend themselves," she said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Prof Dr Siti Suri Arshad said the public should be on high alert for rabid animals as the fatality rate once bitten is almost 100% in humans and animals.

She said rabies remains a global threat, killing approximately 59,000 people annually.

"Rabies is a virus that attacks the central nervous system. An infected person who is not treated before symptoms appear could die from the disease," she said, adding that rabies has the highest mortality rate compared with other diseases.

Siti Suri said while people usually get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal, non-bite exposures are also possible when scratches, abrasions or open wounds are exposed to saliva or the nervous system of a rabid animal.

2,478 new Covid cases on Monday

KUALA LUMPUR: It took three months for the number of daily Covid-19 cases in the country to drop to about 2,000, with 2,478 cases recorded on Monday, said Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

The last time the daily cases recorded a figure of around 2,000 was on Jan 17, which was 2,342, and the highest number of daily cases recorded during the three-month period was on March 5, with 33,406 before going on the downtrend.

Of the total cases recorded on Monday, 98.71%, or 2,446 cases, were in categories one and two, while 32 cases, or 1.29%, were in categories three, four and five.

"Of the total 32 cases in categories three, four and five, 16 cases involved patients who are not vaccinated or had not been fully vaccinated, 10 cases involved those who are fully vaccinated but had not received the booster dose, while six others had received the booster dose.

"Eighteen of the 32 cases are aged 60 years and above while 19 have comorbidities," he said in his daily statement on Covid-19 cases yesterday.

A total of 143 cases were admitted to hospitals on Monday, with 76 of them in categories one and two, while 67 were in categories three, four and five.

The new cases recorded on Monday brought the total Covid-19 cases to 4,433,551 in the country, with a total of 4,330,037 recovered cases.

Noor Hisham said Malaysia's infectivity rate on Monday was 0.73, with Putrajaya recording the highest rate of 1.07. - Bernama

20% of children fully vaccinated

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 736,114 children aged between five and 11 years, or 20.7% of the population in this age group, have completed their vaccination under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) as of Monday.

According to the CovidNOW website, 1,497,935 children, or 42.2% of this group, have received at least one dose of the vaccine. For teenagers between 12 and 17 years old, 2,888,431 individuals, or 92.8%, have completed their vaccination while 2,987,570, or 96%, have received at least one dose.

As for the adult population, a total of 16,014,864 individuals or 68.1% have received the booster dose, while 22,964,800 or 97.6% have completed both doses, and 23,241,481, or 98.8%, have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

On Monday, 38,691 doses of vaccine were administered, comprising 26,489 doses for second shot, 4,524 booster jabs and 7,678 doses for first shot, bringing the cumulative number of doses given out under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme to 70,118,091.

Meanwhile, according to the Health Ministry's GitHub portal, eight deaths related to Covid-19 were reported on Monday, with Selangor recording the most, followed by Kedah and Malacca. - Bernama



TIPS ON SEED SAVING ...

Consumers Association of Penang education officer and agriculture coordinator N.V. Subbarow showing various seeds and a guidebook to cultivate seeds at a plantation in George Town in conjunction with International Seeds Day yesterday.

- BERNAMAPIX

Mandatory to fortify wheat flour with iron, folic acid

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cabinet has agreed to implement mandatory fortification of iron and folic acid into wheat flour in packs of 25kg and below, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said.

Khairy said the move is to ensure that the levels of iron and folic acid in wheat flour are uniform and in line with the World Health Organisation's recommendation of six

milligrammes (mg) of iron and 260mg of folic acid in every 100g of wheat flour.

"At the moment, iron and folic acid are not added into 25kg packs of wheat flour. Both are only added to the 1kg packs of wheat flour voluntarily, with varying levels and lower than the recommended level," he said yesterday.

Khairy said iron and folic acid deficiency

can cause permanent disability problems in infants such as neural tube defects and anaemia.

"The move is expected to improve the quality of nutrients in products produced by the small and medium food industry, such as bread, wet noodles, *roti canai* and cakes," he added. - Bernama