

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Golongan B40 disaran memanfaatkan insentif PeKa B40

Kuala Lumpur: Golongan B40 disaran memanfaatkan saringan kesihatan percuma menerusi program Skim Peduli Kesihatan untuk Kumpulan B40 (PeKa B40).

Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif ProtectHealth Corporation Sdn Bhd (ProtectHealth), Datuk Dr Anas Alam Faizli, berkata saringan kesihatan itu juga percuma kepada penerima Bantuan Prihatin Rakyat (BPR).

"Secara keseluruhan terdapat 5.9 juta penerima BPR layak untuk PeKa B40 dan mereka hanya perlu membawa kad pengenalan ke mana-mana lebih 3,000 klinik swasta yang berdaftar dengan ProtectHealth untuk mendapatkan saringan kesihatan percuma.

"Sebagai contoh, peralatan stent jantung berharga antara RM4,000-RM5,000 dan ia tiada subsidi di hospital kerajaan. Jadi, sekiranya perlu digantikan, PeKa B40 boleh bantu bayar," katanya menerusi twitter, semalam.

Dr Anas Alam berkata, PeKa B40 mempunyai manfaat alat bantuan perubatan hingga RM20,000 untuk setiap individu. Malah, program itu menyediakan manfaat insentif melengkapkan rawatan kanser hingga RM1,000 kepada semua individu.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, sebelum ini dilaporkan berkata, masih ramai tidak memanfaatkan program PeKa B40 yang disediakan secara percuma kepada penerima bantuan sara hidup kerajaan terutama mereka yang berusia 40 tahun ke atas membatikan ketua keluarga dan pasangan.

Beliau berkata, justeru Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) merancang menetapkan satu bulan sebagai Bulan Pemeriksaan Kesihatan Malaysia (BPKM) dengan cadangan awal, ia diadakan pada Julai depan.

Program itu menyediakan manfaat insentif melengkapkan rawatan kanser hingga RM1,000 kepada semua individu

Dr Anas Alam Faizli,
Ketua Pegawai
Eksekutif ProtectHealth



Pembukaan sempadan Malaysia, Singapura

Tak perlu tunjuk salinan fizikal vaksinasi

Johor Bahru: Pengembara serta individu yang memasuki Singapura menerusi pusat pemeriksaan darat dari Malaysia, tidak perlu menunjukkan salinan fizikal sijil vaksinasi COVID-19.

Sebaliknya, pihak Berkuasa Imigresen dan Pusat Pemeriksaan (ICA) Singapura, berkata pengembara hanya perlu menghantar permohonan Kad Ketibaan Singapura (SG Arrival Card) secara dalam talian, sebelum rekod vaksinasi mereka akan disahkan Kementerian Kesihatan Singapura menerusi sistem mereka.

Memetik laporan portal berita Channel News Asia (CNA) kelmarin, ICA berkata penjelasan itu dibuat berikutan mesej WhatsApp tular yang tersebar me-

nenai pengalaman pengembara yang melalui salah satu daripada pusat pemeriksaan laluan darat.

Mesej itu antara lain mendakwa, pengembara yang mahu memasuki Singapura, perlu menunjukkan salinan fizikal rekod vaksinasi, memo pemulihan COVID-19 atau salinan rekod digital SG Arrival Card.

Mesej itu mendakwa, sijil vaksinasi fizikal diperlukan kerana sistem ICA dan Kementerian Kesihatan tidak terhubung dan pengembara tidak boleh mengangap bahawa ICA mempunyai akses kepada rekod vaksinasi mereka.

Mesej itu turut mendakwa, rekod digital SG Arrival Card diperlukan kerana sistem ICA ti-

dak dapat mengesan penyerahan yang dilakukan pengembara secara dalam talian.

Kelmarin, ICA dilaporkan menegaskan, warga Singapura yang kembali ke republik itu, pemastautin tetap dan pemegang pas jangka panjang yang divaksinasi di Singapura tidak perlu menunjukkan salinan fizikal sijil vaksinasi.

Dalam pada itu, pemastautin dan pelawat asing yang divaksinasi di luar Singapura dan ber-jaya memuat naik sijil vaksinasi digital semasa menghantar SG Arrival Card, juga tidak diperlukan membawa salinan fizikal sijil vaksinasi untuk ditunjukkan kepada pegawai ICA di pusat pemeriksaan darat.

Menerusi rangka kerja VTL

sebelum ini, pengembara yang sudah divaksin serta mereka yang telah pulih dari COVID-19 juga tidak perlu menunjukkan memo pemulihan apabila memasuki Singapura melalui jalan darat.

Mulai jam 11.59 malam pada 31 Mac lalu, semua pengembara yang telah divaksin sepenuhnya, serta kanak-kanak berumur 12 tahun ke bawah, dilaporkan boleh memasuki Singapura dengan hanya ujian awal COVID-19.

Pelancong juga dilaporkan tidak perlu lagi memohon kelulusan kemasukan atau menaiki pengangkutan VTL yang ditetapkan untuk memasuki Singapura tanpa kuarantin, malah tiada lagi kuota pada bilangan ketibaan harian ke republik itu.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 9

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Penghidap diabetes lebih mudah dijangkiti gejala serius

Orang ramai diminta jaga kesihatan, amal diet seimbang

©Foto: Mahanani Isahak
mahani@bh.com.my

Shah Alam: Penghidap diabetes berdepan risiko tiga hingga empat kali lebih mudah untuk dijangkiti gejala COVID-19 yang serius berbanding individu yang tidak menghidap penyakit itu.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata diabetes sudah lama wujud dalam masyarakat negara ini, justeru rakyat

perlu berusaha membendungnya daripada terus menular yang akhirnya memberi kesan terhadap kualiti hidup penduduk Malaysia.

"Diabetes bukan sahaja dikaitkan dengan pengambilan gula berlebihan, malah berkait rapat dengan cara pemakanan tidak terkawal dan amalan hidup tidak sihat.

"Orang ramai perlu menjaga kesihatan diri dengan mengamalkan diet pemakanan sihat dan seimbang serta mengamalkan cara hidup yang aktif.

"Ibu bapa juga harus menjadi contoh kepada anak dalam mengamalkan cara hidup yang sihat bagi memastikan anak kita terus sihat, cergas dan bebas daripada sebarang penyakit," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian ketika

berucap pada Kempen Perangi Diabetes anjuran Selangor FC dan syarikat farmaseutikal Sanofi Aventis Malaysia (Sanofi), yang berlangsung secara maya, semalam.

Mengulas lanjut, Khairy dilaporkan Bernama sebagai berkata, tinjauan Kebangsaan Kesihatan dan Mobiliti (NHMS) 2019 mendapati, peratusan pesakit diabetes di Malaysia meningkat daripada 13.4 peratus pada 2015 kepada 18.3 peratus pada 2019.

"Laporan ini menunjukkan empat juta penduduk negara ini atau seorang daripada lima individu dewasa berusia 18 tahun ke atas di negara ini, hidup dengan diabetes," katanya.

Sementara itu, beliau berkata, Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menggalakkan kerjasama indus-

tri atau ahli akademik dalam penyelidikan klinikal penggunaan kanabis atau ganja dalam perubatan.

Katanya, setakat ini, KKM tidak menerima laporan penuh mengenai kegunaan CBD atau *cannabidiol* (antara kandungan aktif dalam pokok kanabis) untuk tujuan perubatan.

"Sejak kebelakangan ini, banyak perbincangan mengenai penggunaan ganja dalam perubatan.

"Namun, KKM konsisten dalam mengamalkan dasar berasaskan bukti. Sebab itulah kita mengaluh-alukan kajian klinikal penggunaan CBD untuk tujuan perubatan," katanya menerusi siaran Twitter.

Khairy berkata, kerjasama membabitkan industri atau ahli

Ibu bapa juga harus menjadi contoh kepada anak dalam mengamalkan cara hidup yang sihat bagi memastikan anak kita terus sihat, cergas dan bebas daripada sebarang penyakit

Khairy Jamaluddin,
Menteri Kesihatan



akademik itu boleh diselaraskan dengan Institut Penyelidikan Klinikal dan Clinical Research Malaysia (CRM) yang diwujudkan KKM, sejak 2012.

"Setakat ini, hanya banyak luahan minat, ceramah dan advokasi dalam media sosial.

"KKM amat mengalu-alukan penyelidikan terbabit dimulakan industri atau ahli akademik. Kami sedia bekerjasama," katanya.

'Teruskan pakai pelitup muka'

Putrajaya: Orang ramai diingatkan jangan leka dan terus memakai pelitup muka, terutama di kawasan berisiko tinggi untuk jangkitan, walaupun negara sudah memasuki fasa peralihan ke endemik.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata ancaman bahaya virus SARS-CoV-2 tidak boleh diabaikan sama ada ketika dalam fasa peralihan ke endemik mahupun ketika fasa endemik.

Beliau menjelaskan, ini kerana virus SARS-CoV-2 amat mudah merebak melalui titisan cecair atau titisan saluran pernafasan (respiratory droplets).

"Masyarakat harus tetap berwaspada kerana virus ini masih wujud dan menular serta mengakibatkan kematian, terutama dalam kalangan warga emas, kanak-kanak mempunyai sistem imuniti tubuh yang rendah dan individu ada komorbid.

"Walaupun sebahagian besar penduduk Malaysia sudah menerima vaksin COVID-19 bagi dos primer, amalan pemakaian pelitup muka dan penjarakan fizikal yang munasabah masih perlu diteruskan setiap individu dalam fasa peralihan ke endemik.

"Ia bagi memberi perlindungan berterusan kepada golongan berisiko tinggi. Menurut Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO), pemakaian pelitup muka antara langkah pencegahan yang dapat mengurangkan penularan virus SARS-CoV-2, terutama di kawasan berisiko tinggi untuk

jangkitan seperti tempat tertutup dengan pengudaraan tidak baik, tempat sesak, dan tempat individu melakukan interaksi jarak dekat," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, saranan itu selaras penjelasan Dr Mike Ryan daripada WHO, bahawa istilah endemik merujuk suatu penyakit sentiasa wujud dalam masyarakat atau sesuatu tempat, namun jangkitan berlaku pada kadar yang stabil.

"Namun, ada kemungkinan berlaku peningkatan penularan secara bermusim ataupun gelombang jangkitan yang besar sekali dengan peningkatan kejadian penyakit serius.

"Dr Mike Ryan juga mengingatkan ada beberapa penyakit seperti Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), tuberkulosis dan malaria dikategorikan sebagai penyakit yang endemik di sebahagian kawasan di dunia, namun terus mengakibatkan kematian berjuta-juta orang setiap tahun.

"Masyarakat harus tetap berwaspada kerana virus ini masih wujud dan menular serta mengakibatkan kematian, terutama dalam kalangan warga emas, kanak-kanak mempunyai sistem imuniti tubuh yang rendah"

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah,
Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan



Kanser kepala, leher kelima tertinggi dihidapi penduduk

Kota Bharu: Kanser kepala dan leher adalah penyakit kanser kelima tertinggi yang dihidapi oleh penduduk di negara ini serta Asia Tenggara.

Pensyarah Perubatan Jabatan Otorinolaringologi, Surgeri Kepala dan Leher, Pusat Pengajian Sains Perubatan (PPSP), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Profesor Dr Irfan Mohamad, berkata kanser kepala dan leher biasanya membabitkan kawasan bibir, mulut, langit, hidung, farinks, laringks dan telinga serta kawasan kelenjar air liur utama parotid dan submandibular.

Katanya, faktor risiko terbesar yang boleh dicegah untuk kanser kepala dan leher ialah amalan merokok serta pengambilan alkohol kerana interaksi kedua-duanya dapat memberikan kesan bersifat sinergistik.

Kanser ini kurang popular berbanding kanser paru-paru, payudara, limfoma, leukemia mahupun kanser usus, namun ia kanser kelima tertinggi di negara ini.

Tanda kanser kepala dan leher ialah bengkak pada leher atau anggota yang terabit, ulser melebihi dua minggu, pendarahan hidung yang lam-

bat berhenti kecuali ada penyebab seperti trauma, sukar bernafas akibat penyempitan saluran pernafasan, sukar atau sakit semasa menelan.

"Selain itu, mata kabur atau nampak berbayang, gigi mudah tanggal atau gusi yang membesar, hidung tersumbat, telinga bernanah dan berdarah, perubahan pada suara, batuk berdarah, juling yang bukan semula jadi atau sejak lahir serta sakit kepala yang berterusan.

"Jika ada tanda ini, pesakit perlu segera berjumpa doktor atau pakar otorinolaringologi bagi pemeriksaan lanjut," katanya.

Beliau berkata, bagi membantu pesakit yang menghidapi kanser kepala dan leher, strategi rawatan sudah diatur mengikut tahap dan kesesuaian individu berkenaan.

Secara amnya, beliau berkata, pembedahan adalah kaedah utama bagi rawatan kanser kepala dan leher kecuali bagi kanser nasofarinks dan laringks yang masih boleh memanfaatkan radioterapi sebagai rawatan utama.

"Namun, pemilihan rawatan paling sesuai bergantung kepada tahap kanser," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : LOKAL

Kuala Lumpur

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah menasihatkan masyarakat agar terus berwaspada terhadap penularan pandemik Covid-19 dalam fasa peralihan ke endemik dengan memakai pelitup muka bagi mengawal jangkitan virus itu.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, pemakaian pelitup muka antara langkah pencegahan yang dapat mengurangkan penularan virus terutama di kawasan jangkitan berisiko tinggi seperti tempat tertutup dengan pengudaraan tidak baik, tempat sesak dan tempat individu melakukan interaksi jarak dekat.

Katanya, Covid-19 masih menular serta mengakibatkan kematian terutama dalam kalangan warga emas, kanak-kanak, individu mempunyai sistem imuniti tubuh rendah dan individu mempunyai komorbid.

Menurut Dr Noor Hisham, amalan terbaik adalah kedua-dua individu iaitu pembawa Covid-19 dan individu sihat memakai pelitup muka kerana cara itu menjadikan risiko penularan virus pada tahap sangat rendah.

"Ini (pemakaian pelitup muka) berdasarkan kemungkinan ada individu tak tahu dijangkiti Covid-19 berada di kawasan umum kerana tidak bergejala," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, pemakaian pelitup muka yang betul adalah dengan pelitup muka menutup hidung serta mulut sepenuhnya, bukan sekadar di bawah atau hujung hidung memandangkan virus Sars-CoV-2 amat mudah merebak melalui titisan cecair atau titisan saluran pernafasan.

"Amalan saling tegur-menegur tidak asing lagi bagi masyarakat di negara ini di

Teruskan pakai pelitup muka

Saran orang ramai terus waspada di fasa endemik



SEORANG pengunjung mengimbas kod QR MySejahtera sebelum memasuki premis di Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman di ibu kota, semalam. Rakyat harus mematuhi prosedur operasi standard (SOP) seperti memakai pelitup muka bagi mengelak penularan Covid-19. - Gambar NSTP/ASYRAF HAMZAH



Jika ada individu tidak memakai pelitup muka atau memakainya dengan tidak betul, kita boleh saling menegur secara berhemah"

Dr Noor Hisham

mana ia amalan solidariti bagi kebaikan bersama. Jika ada individu tidak memakai pelitup muka atau memakainya dengan tidak betul, kita boleh saling menegur secara berhemah.

"Amalan ini perlu dibuda-

ayakan demi menjaga kesihatan sesama kita selain terus mengamalkan penjarakan fizikal yang munasabah dan segera mendapatkan dos penggalak," katanya.

Senarai penuh prosedur operasi standard (SOP) melibatkan pemakaian pelitup muka boleh didapati di laman www.mysop.gov.my.

Mengenai perkembangan Covid-19 dalam negara kelmarin, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, kes baharu kekal di bawah paras 15,000 untuk empat hari berturut-turut dengan 12,017 kes, menjadikan kumulatif kes di negara kini 4,268,486 kes.

Mengenai penggunaan fasiliti kesihatan khusus bagi

kes Covid-19, beliau berkata, hanya Selangor mencatat peratusan pengisian 50 peratus atau lebih bagi penggunaan katil Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) setakat kelmarin iaitu 51 peratus.

Menurut Dr Noor Hisham, 558 kes Covid-19 dimasukkan ke hospital kelmarin dengan 221 kes kategori tiga, empat dan lima sementara selebihnya kategori satu serta dua.

Kadar kebolehjangkitan Covid-19 atau nilai Rt dicatat di seluruh negara pula 0.86 dengan Selangor merekodkan kadar tertinggi iaitu 1.03 manakala Kelantan mencatat kadar paling rendah dengan 0.66.

6,646 positif tidak bergejala

Putrajaya: Sebanyak 12,017 kes baharu jangkitan Covid-19 dilaporkan setakat kelmarin dengan 55.30 peratus bersamaan 6,646 kes membabitkan pesakit kategori satu atau tidak bergejala.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, perkembangan itu menjadikan sehingga kini jumlah individu dijangkiti Covid-19 meningkat kepada 4,268,486 kes.

Mengulas kes kelmarin, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, ia membabitkan 11,958 kes penularan tempatan dengan 59 kes jangkitan luar negara.

Memperincikan kategori kes dikesan kelmarin, Dr Noor Hisham memaklumkan pesakit kategori dua sebanyak 44.13 peratus atau 5,303 kes.

"Selain itu pesakit kategori tiga membabitkan 28 kes, kategori lima (25 kes) dan kategori empat (15 kes).

44.13%

Peratusan pesakit bابت kategori dua

Secara keseluruhan, daripada jumlah kategori tiga hingga lima, 40 kes membabitkan individu mempunyai komorbid dan berumur 60 tahun ke atas (38 kes).

"Turut dikesan individu sudah terima dua dos vaksin namun tiada dos penggalak (29 kes), sudah menerima dos penggalak (24 kes) dan tidak divaksinasi atau belum lengkap vaksin (15 kes)," katanya.

Sehingga kini, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, ada 234 kes dirawat di Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) iaitu 102 kes positif dengan 132 kes disyaki, berkemungkinan dan dalam siasatan.

Kuala Terengganu: Kerajaan Terengganu kesal dengan tindakan sesetengah ibu bapa yang sanggup merisikokan kesihatan anak mereka dengan membawa bayi dan kanak-kanak ke bazar Ramadan tanpa memakai pelitup muka.

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Kerajaan Tempatan, Perumahan, Kesihatan dan

GAGAL PATUHI SOP DI BAZAR RAMADAN

'Tinggal sebentar anak kecil di rumah'

Alam Sekitar negeri Dr Alias Razak berkata, lebih-lebih lagi Terengganu masih berada pada kedudukan kedua terendah dalam Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan, Ka-

nak-Kanak (PICKids).

Setakat kelmarin, kadar vaksinasi PICKids di Terengganu hanya 12.6 peratus daripada 178,700 populasi kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 yang sudah

menerima suntikan dos pertama vaksin Covid-19.

"Saya nasihatkan ibu bapa kalau sayangkan anak, tinggalkanlah sebentar di rumah atau dalam kereta, bergilir sahaja suami isteri

untuk pergi sebentar membeli juadah berbuka puasa.

"Kita tidak tahu di bazar ini mungkin ada individu positif Covid-19 namun tidak bergejala. Kita tidak mahu jika dijangkiti, kesi-

hatan mereka teruk kerana belum dapat perlindungan (vaksin)," katanya selepas membuat tinjauan di bazar Ramadan Dataran Shahbandar di sini, kelmarin.

Menurutnya, tahun ini, ada 59 lokasi bazar Ramadan di seluruh Terengganu membabitkan 4,938 gerai makanan dan 9,666 pengendali makanan.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : COVID-19



KADAR vaksinasi yang tinggi di dalam negara pada masa ini menyumbang kepada penurunan kes positif Covid-19.

11,636 terima dos penggalak semalam

Kuala Lumpur: Sebanyak 33,621 kanak-kanak berusia antara lima hingga 11 di negara ini sudah lengkap menerima dua dos suntikan vaksin Covid-19 menerusi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-Kanak (PICKKids) setakat kelmarin.

Berdasarkan laman web Covidnow, sejumlah 1353,774 kanak-kanak dalam kumpulan sama atau 38.1 peratus daripada populasi berkenaan sudah menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi dewasa, seramai 15,876,357 individu atau 67.5 peratus pula sudah menerima dos penggalak, manakala 22,954,326 individu atau 97.6 peratus sudah lengkap vaksinasi dan 23,231,749 atau 98.8 peratus sudah menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi remaja berusia antara 12 hingga 17, seramai 2,854,230 individu atau 91.7 peratus sudah lengkap divaksinasi dan 2,950,267 individu atau 94.8 peratus sudah menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.



Sebanyak 22,807 dos vaksin sudah diberikan semalam, membabitkan 2,501 kes pertama, 8,670 dos kedua dan 11,636 dos penggalak, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif dos yang diberikan di bawah Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) kepada 69,042,067.

Sementara itu, menurut portal GitHub Kementerian Kesihatan, sebanyak 33 kematian akibat Covid-19 dilaporkan di negara ini kelmarin dengan Selangor mencatatkan jumlah tertinggi iaitu lapan kematian.

Ini diikuti Perak dengan enam kes, Kedah (empat) dan tiga kematian di Sarawak, Johor, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang dan Perlis masing-masing merekodkan dua kes manakala Pulau Pinang dan Kuala Lumpur masing-masing satu kes kematian.

Faktor kadar kes jangkitan menurun

Imuniti tinggi hasil vaksinasi sumbang kadar penurunan jangkitan

Oleh Yusmizal Dolah Aling
yusmizal@hmetro.com.my

Kuala Lumpur

Beberapa faktor dikenal pasti menjadi penyebab kepada penurunan kes jangkitan Covid-19 sejak beberapa hari lalu walaupun negara berada pada fasa peralihan ke endemik ketika ini.

Presiden Persatuan Doktor-Doktor Islam Malaysia (Perdim) Dr Boi Saidi Abdul Razak berkata, antara yang menyumbang termasuklah kadar vaksinasi yang tinggi di dalam negara pada masa ini.

Menurutnya, jumlah mereka yang divaksin dua dos sebanyak hampir 80 peratus dan dos penggalak sebanyak 48.6 peratus memberikan imuniti kepada badan seseorang.

Katanya, ia menyebabkan seseorang itu mempunyai ketahanan yang tinggi untuk melawan virus.

"Apa yang terjadi, kadang-kadang apabila mereka mempunyai imuniti, gejala menjadi tidak kuat. Ada orang sehari dua demam dan sembuh sendiri tanpa ubat."

"Hinggakan ada yang dijangkiti Covid-19 satu atau dua hari, tidak sempat kita nak periksa, mereka sembuh sendiri dengan imuniti ini tadi atau apa yang kita kenali sebagai asimtomatik," katanya kepada Harian Metro.

Beliau mengulas mengenai penurunan jangkitan harian pada tahap 10,000 sejak tiga hari lalu seperti dilaporkan Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM).

Menurutnya, faktor lain adalah imuniti alami di dalam badan bagi mereka yang sudah dijangkiti sebelum ini menyebabkan mereka mempunyai daya tahan melawan virus.

"Bagi mereka yang pernah dijangkiti, badan mereka mempunyai imuniti alami, di mana kalau ada varian lain menyerang, tahap imuniti kita tinggi."

"Selain itu, kuarantin sendiri di rumah juga membantu menurunkan kes harian. Dasar kerajaan ketika ini, Covid-19 tahap satu dan dua perlu menjalani kuarantin sendiri."

"Data terkini menunjukkan 97.6 peratus menjalani kuarantin sendiri. Mereka tidak perlu ke klinik, atau Pusat Kuarantin dan Rawa-

tan Covid-19 Berisiko Rendah (PIKRC), sebaliknya berada di rumah, ada yang asimtomatik tetapi tidak maklumkan, itu yang menyebabkan kes rendah," katanya.

Beliau berkata, mutasi daripada genom yang menghasilkan pelbagai jenis varian seperti Omicron yang mempunyai karakter sendiri, tidak berbahaya tetapi mudah dijangkiti.

"Justeru, Perdim menasihatkan orang ramai agar terus menjaga prosedur operasi standard (SOP) seperti memakai pelitup muka dan menjaga penjarakan ketika berada di tempat sesak bagi mengelak dijangkiti."

"Pembukaan sempadan juga akan merancakkan pergerakan serta memacu ekonomi negara. Perdim juga berterima kasih kepada kerajaan berhubung perkembangan ini, namun rakyat mesti berhati-hati dan mematuhi SOP," katanya.

"Tidak sempat kita nak periksa, mereka sembuh sendiri dengan imuniti ini"
Dr Boi Saidi

Tak perlu salinan fizikal vaksinasi

Johor Bahru: Pengembara serta individu yang memasuki Singapura menerusi pusat pemeriksaan darat dari Malaysia, tidak perlu menunjukkan salinan fizikal sijil vaksinasi Covid-19.

Sebaliknya, Pihak Berkualiti Imigresen dan Pusat Pemeriksaan (ICA) Singapura berkata, pengembara hanya perlu menghantar permohonan Kad Ketibaan Singapura (SG Arrival Card) secara dalam talian, sebelum rekod vaksinasi mereka disahkan Kementerian Kesihatan Singapura menerusi sistem mereka.

Memetik laporan portal

berita Channel News Asia (CNA) kelmarin, ICA berkata, penjelasan itu dibuat berikutan mesej WhatsApp tular yang tersebar mengenai pengalaman pengembara yang melalui satu daripada pusat pemeriksaan laluan darat.

Mesej itu antara lain mendakwa, pengembara yang mahu memasuki Singapura perlu menunjukkan salinan fizikal rekod vaksinasi, memo pemulihan Covid-19 atau salinan rekod digital SG Arrival Card.

Mesej itu mendakwa, sijil vaksinasi fizikal diperlukan kerana sistem ICA dan Keme-

nterian Kesihatan tidak terhubung dan pengembara tidak boleh mengangap bahawa ICA mempunyai akses kepada rekod vaksinasi mereka.

Mesej itu turut mendakwa, rekod digital SG Arrival Card diperlukan kerana sistem ICA tidak dapat mengesan penyerahan yang dilakukan pengembara secara dalam talian.

Kelmarin, ICA dilaporkan menegaskan, warga Singapura yang kembali ke republik itu, pemastautin tetap dan pemegang pas jangka panjang yang divaksinasi di Singapura tidak perlu menunjukkan salinan fizikal sijil vaksinasi.

Dalam pada itu, pemastautin dan pelawat asing yang divaksinasi di luar Singapura dan berjaya memuat naik sijil vaksinasi digital semasa menghantar SG Arrival Card, juga tidak perlu membawa salinan fizikal sijil vaksinasi untuk ditunjukkan kepada pegawai ICA di pusat pemeriksaan darat.

Menerusi rangka kerja VTL sebelum ini, pengembara yang sudah divaksin serta mereka yang pulih dari Covid-19 juga tidak perlu menunjukkan memo pemulihan apabila memasuki Singapura melalui jalan darat.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NEGARA

Bawa anak ambil vaksin sebelum beraya elak long covid

PETALING JAYA – Orang ramai dinasihati supaya mendapatkan suntikan vaksin untuk anak-anak yang layak sebelum pulang ke kampung halaman menyambut Hari Raya Aidilfitri, bulan depan.

Pakar Kesihatan Awam Fakulti Perubatan dan Sains Kesihatan Universiti Putra Malaysia, Prof. Dr. Malina Osman berkata, perkara itu penting bagi mengelak kesan lebih buruk sekiranya kanak-kanak dijangkiti Covid-19 semasa pulang beraya.

"Saya harap kedua-duanya sama ada individu dewasa mahupun kanak-kanak umur lima hingga 11 tahun dan warga emas yang belum terima dos penggalak dapatkan vaksin segera.

"Kemasukan kanak-kanak ke hospital telah meningkat sejak awal tahun dan mereka mudah mendapat komplikasi serius 'long covid', jadi mari kita cuba elakkan keadaan sedemikian.

"Kita tidak dapat mengelak daripada keperluan mendapatkan suntikan vaksin kerana memasuki fasa peralihan endemik



NORAN

dengan banyak interaksi sosial akan berlaku dan ia lebih banyak berlaku apabila di kampung," katanya semalam.

Media sebelum ini melaporkan terdapat 119,000 kes jangkitan Covid-19 dalam kalangan kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun dilaporkan setakat Januari hingga Mac 2022.

Kanak-kanak tersebut bukan sahaja mendapat gejala ringan, tetapi ada antara mereka mendapat gejala serius sehingga dima-



GELAGAT 'Spiderman' mencebikan kanak-kanak yang mengambil suntikan vaksin di Kipmall Melaka pada 16 Februari lalu.

sukkan ke unit rawatan rapi.

Data terkini menunjukkan hanya 38 peratus kanak-kanak mendapat vaksinasi, manakala remaja (91.7 peratus) dan dos penggalak sekitar 67.3 peratus.

Malina berkata, walaupun sekarang negara secara keseluruhan bertambah baik, tetapi risiko

untuk mereka yang belum divaksin mengalami komplikasi serius masih tinggi.

"Dalam keadaan yang ideal, saya secara peribadi menyasarkan sekurang-kurangnya 70 peratus liputan vaksin untuk kanak-kanak, tetapi ia masih lagi gagal dicapai dan ketika ini hanya 38

peratus sahaja," ujarnya.

Sementara itu, Pakar Epidemiologi dan Pakar Perubatan Kesihatan Awam dari Universiti Malaya, Prof. Dr. Noran Naqiah Hairi menzahirkan kebimbangan mengenai risiko kanak-kanak belum divaksin dibawa ke bazar Ramadan.

Menurut beliau, bazar Ramadan merupakan kawasan terbuka, tetapi keadaannya yang sesak dengan orang ramai berisiko menularkan jangkitan tersebut terhadap kanak-kanak terbahit.

"Jika belum divaksin jangan bawa ke kawasan sesak. Kita faham semua mahu kembali ke tahun 2019, tetapi kita belum sampai ke tahap itu," katanya.

Beliau seterusnya meminta orang ramai tidak memandang ringan kesan jangka masa panjang Covid-19 terhadap kanak-kanak kerana terdapat laporan mereka berisiko mengalami penyakit kencing manis.

"Covid-19 masih penyakit baru dan banyak lagi kita tidak tahu tentangnya termasuk kesan jangka masa panjang," jelasnya.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 15

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penghidap diabetes lebih mudah dijangkiti gejala Covid-19 serius

SHAH ALAM

Penghidap diabetes adalah tiga hingga empat kali lebih mudah untuk dijangkiti gejala Covid-19 yang serius berbanding individu yang tidak menghidap penyakit itu, kata Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar.

Beliau berkata, memandangkan penyakit diabetes telah lama wujud dalam masyarakat, maka rakyat perlu berusaha untuk membendunginya daripada terus menular yang akhirnya akan memberi kesan terhadap kualiti hidup penduduk Malaysia.

"Diabetes bukan sahaja dikaitkan dengan pengambilan gula berlebihan malah ia berkait rapat dengan cara pemakanan yang tidak terkawal dan amalan cara hidup yang tidak sihat," katanya ketika berucap pada Kempen Perangi Diabetes anjuran Selangor FC dan syarikat farmaseutikal Sanofi Aventis Malaysia (Sanofi) yang berlangsung secara maya pada Rabu.

Justeru beliau mengingatkan orang ramai tentang kepentingan menjaga kesihatan diri dengan mengamalkan diet pemakanan yang sihat dan seimbang serta mengamalkan cara hidup yang aktif.

"Tbu bapa juga harus menjadi contoh kepada anak-anak dalam me-

MEDEPANI KRISIS
COVID-19:
APA TINDAKAN
KITA?

ngamalkan cara hidup yang sihat bagi memastikan anak-anak kita terus sihat, cergas dan bebas daripada sebarang penyakit," katanya.

Menurutnya, tinjauan Kebangsaan Kesihatan dan Mobiditi (NHMS) 2019 mendapati peratusan pesakit diabetes di Malaysia telah meningkat daripada 13.4 peratus pada 2015 kepada 18.3 peratus (2019).

"Laporan ini telah menunjukkan satu daripada lima individu dewasa berumur 18 tahun ke atas di negara ini, hidup dengan diabetes atau persamaan hampir 4 juta penduduk Malaysia," kata beliau.

KHAIRY

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NATION

Reports by RAHIMY RAHIM, R. SEKARAN, IMRAN HILMY, MOHD FARHAAN SHAH and IYLIA MARSYA ISKANDAR

Getting testy upon arrival

Malaysians quiz need for back-to-back screening

PETALING JAYA: Malaysian travellers arriving in the country are fuming that they have to pay for an expensive professional RTK-Antigen test at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) when they had already done a pre-departure PCR test.

They also questioned the need for the on-arrival test when Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines have stopped it or have announced that they will halt doing so soon.

Cindy Foo, 35, who returned from Jakarta, said she had to do the RTK-Antigen test at the airport on April 1.

"We had to wait for the test at KLIA. I don't understand why we have to be tested again when we had already taken the pre-departure test," she said yesterday.

Another traveller from Singapore, Muhammad Hamid, 39, also questioned the need to do the test again.

"It would be easier for us if they scrap the on-arrival testing just like other countries in the region," he added.

There are several types of on-arrival Covid-19 test options available at KLIA and Klia2, with the professional RTK-Antigen (nasal) test costing RM100 for Malaysians and RM160 for foreigners.

The normal cost in a clinic would be around RM60 to RM70.

It takes between 15 and 30 minutes for the test results to be out.

For the Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) test, Malaysians are charged RM250 while international travellers pay RM350. It usually costs between RM180 and RM250.

As for the rapid RT-PCR test, it will cost RM370 for Malaysians while foreigners pay RM470. The usual price is below RM350.

Private Covid-19 screening provider BP Healthcare is the sole company handling Covid-19 RT-PCR screening services, which is mandatory for all incoming travellers at KLIA and Klia2.

Malaysian Airport Holdings Bhd (MAHB), however, has denied claims that the RTK testing at international airports was monopolised by one company.

A senior official said there were four different health service providers at four international airports —



Easy does it: A health worker carrying out an RT-PCR Covid-19 test at KLIA. — SAMUEL ONG/The Star

RTK ANTIGEN TEST PROCESS UPON ARRIVAL IN MALAYSIA AIRPORTS



Note: If invalid, you need to repeat lab testing
Source: Malaysia Airports

ON-ARRIVAL COVID-19 TESTS

Covid-19 test type	Time needed for result (upon sample arrival at lab)	Minimum time before airline check-in counter closes	Malaysian price	Non-Malaysian price
Rapid RT-PCR Test	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	RM370*	RM470*
RT-PCR	3 hours	4 hours	RM250*	RM350*
RTK Antigen (Nasal)	15 - 30 minutes	45 minutes	RM100	RM160
Antibody Test	< 24 hours	< 24 hours	RM90	RM120

* An additional RM100 (PPE) for each family is required for departure

Source: BP Healthcare

TheStar graphics

ers at four international airports — KLIA, Penang International Airport, Kota Kinabalu International Airport and Kuching International Airport.

From April 1, fully vaccinated travellers entering Malaysia are required to undergo a PCR test two days before departure and will also

have to undergo a professional RTK-Antigen test within 24 hours upon arrival.

AirAsia Malaysia chief executive officer Riad Asmat said that while it welcomed the reopening of international borders, many Asean countries have made the journey easier

by simplifying testing regimes for travellers.

"Cambodia, for example, has completely removed any testing requirement, while travellers to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines are required to undertake one Covid-19 test (either pre-departure or on-arrival)," he said.

He noted that in Malaysia, although the pre-departure PCR test requirement remains, travellers have to undergo the RTK-Antigen test within 24 hours of arrival.

"This provides greater flexibility and eases the travel process.

"As the pandemic situation continues to evolve, travel processes and regulations such as the number and type of tests could also be reviewed periodically to ensure their relevance, without burdening travellers," he added.

He said as Covid-19 tests become increasingly essential for travellers, the affordability of the mandatory testing would also affect the attractiveness of Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination.

"Cheaper PCR and RTK tests will reduce the cost for travellers and support a more effective recovery of the tourism and aviation industry, without compromising public health.

"Allowing more health service providers to offer testing services at Malaysian airports will encourage competition and increase efficiency of test services available," said Riad.

Malaysia Aviation Group said that it stands guided by the government's directives and appreciates its intervention to simplify the SOP so that travellers are able to enter Malaysia safely.

'Review requirement for incoming passengers'

GEORGE TOWN: Air travellers are hoping that upon arrival a professional Covid-19 RTK-Antigen test can be done away with as the charges are too costly.

Singapore-based Penangite TK Lee, 45, said paying RM99 for the test at Penang International Airport was too steep.

"I could have put this money to good use, like buying food for my family for one week. I hope the government would consider removing this requirement for all incoming visitors," he said.

Fully vaccinated air travellers will have to undergo a professional RTK-Antigen test within 24 hours of arrival.

The charge for RTK-Antigen test

done at airports is RM99 for Malaysians and RM160 for non-Malaysians. The test is only between RM60 and RM80 in private clinics.

Travel operators, too, have voiced their concerns on certain requirements which they claimed as not "conducive" for international travellers.

Penang Medical Practitioners Society president Datuk KK Tan said the rate for RTK-Antigen test carried out at private clinics was between RM60 and RM80 for both Malaysians and non-Malaysians.

He said the higher charges at the airports could be due to the set-up cost.

On the 24-hour test upon arrival, Tan said it could be temporary as

the Health Ministry could relax the ruling once the threat of the Covid-19 virus was contained.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Noor Azmi Ghazali told the Dewan Rakyat recently that BP Healthcare was appointed based on the open tender process while the charges had already been agreed upon.

"There is no question of a single provider providing health services to all the airports in the country. For convenience sake, travellers can do the test at the airport instead of the clinics outside," he said.

International travellers coming into Langkawi through direct flights have to conduct a Covid-19 self-test within 24 hours upon arrival.

Langkawi Development Autho-

rity chief executive officer Nasaruddin Abdul Muttalib said they also had to report the test results via the MySejahtera application.

"They can either do it at private facilities on the island or at any drive-through centres at their hotel or place of accommodation," he said when contacted.

He said those who fly on transit could do their test at KLIA.

Nasaruddin said three health service providers were offering the service at Langkawi International Airport.

He said the companies charge between RM60 and RM298 for professional RTK-Antigen, Rapid Molecular PCR and RT-PCR tests.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

COVID-19 ENDEMIC PHASE

PUBLIC REMINDED TO MASK UP

Wearing of face masks is the best practice to lower risk of transmission, says Health D-G

NOR AIN MOHAMED RADHI
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

EVERYONE must keep wearing their face masks, despite Malaysia transitioning to endemicity and the majority of the population having received the primary doses of the Covid-19 vaccines.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the practice of wearing face masks and physical distancing should continue to protect those in the high-risk group, such as children, the elderly, those with weak immune system and with comorbidities.

He said the wearing of face masks was the best practice for people who were in close contact, as well as for a virus-carrier and a healthy person, because the risk of transmission would be very low.

"There are those who are unaware that they have been infected with Covid-19 as they are asymptomatic.

"As such, the Health Ministry calls on the public not to be complacent and continue to wear face masks as the SARS-CoV-2 virus can easily spread through respiratory droplets," he said yesterday, urging the public to reprimand those who either did not wear a face mask or wore it improperly.

"The practice of reminding one another is no stranger to our culture.

"It is a good practice that



Visitors wearing face masks checking in via MySejahtera at the Kelana Jaya Ramadan bazaar recently. BERNAMA PIC

promotes solidarity."

On new cases, Dr Noor Hisham said the ministry had recorded 12,017 fresh infections on Tuesday, an increase from 10,002 cases the day before.

These new cases, he said, had raised Malaysia's caseload tally to 4,268,486.

"From Tuesday's new cases, he said, 6,646 (55.30 per cent) were in Category 1; 5,303 (44.13 per cent) in Category 2; 28 (0.23 per cent) in Category 3; 15 (0.13 per cent) in Category 4; and 25 (0.21 per cent) in Category 5.

"Of the 68 cases reported in categories 3, 4 and 5; 15 involved unvaccinated or partially vac-

inated patients; 29 were those who have been fully vaccinated but had not received their booster shots, and 24 were patients who had received the booster jab.

"A total 38 cases were those aged 60 and above, and 40 had comorbidities," he said.

He added that there were 234 patients being treated in intensive care units (ICU) and 131 required ventilator support.

Dr Noor Hisham also said bed use at the ICU for Covid-19 patients in states and federal ter-

ritories was below 50 per cent, except in Selangor, which was at 51 per cent on Tuesday.

As for non-ICU beds, he said Selangor and Putrajaya reported over 50 per cent occupancy with 55 per cent each.

"There were 558 Covid-19 patients who have been warded on Tuesday with 221 from categories 3 to 5 (39.6 per cent), while the remaining 337 were in categories 1 and 2 (60.4 per cent)."

Dr Noor Hisham said the national infectivity rate (Rt) re-

mained at 0.86 for the second consecutive day on Tuesday.

Selangor, however, recorded an Rt value higher than the national level at 1.03.

On fatalities, he said 33 deaths were recorded on Tuesday, bringing the country's death toll to 35,160.

Ten of Tuesday's fatalities were brought-in-dead cases, with two from Perak, two each in Sarawak and Kelantan, and one each in Negri Sembilan, Pahang, Penang and Perlis.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Khairy: Ministry open to clinical trials

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry has not received a full submission for a clinical trial on the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

This, said minister Khairy Jamaluddin, was despite many expressions of interest, talk and social media advocacy on the matter.

He, however, said the min-

istry would welcome such studies.

"Much discussion of late on the medicinal use of marijuana and @KKMPutrajaya (the Health Ministry) has been consistent in practising evidence-based policies.

"That's why we have welcomed clinical studies for the use of CBD (cannabidiol) for

medicinal purposes.

"This can be coordinated by @ICR_NIH (Institute of Clinical Research and National Institute of Health) and @ClinicalResearchMY (Clinical Research Malaysia)."

Khairy said the ministry would welcome any industry or academia-initiated research on the medicinal use of CBD.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NATION

Clever eating key to managing glucose levels, say experts

PETALING JAYA: Eating is almost a national passion in Malaysia and while enjoying the good food is fine, what we need is "clever eating", say experts.

"It's about moderate eating that includes taking proper supplements and increasing exercise to burn off the excess sugar so that they don't turn into fat," said holistic medical practitioner Datuk Dr Rajen Manicka.

Clever eating, he said, meant less carbs and smaller portions, eating

more protein and healthy fat.

Starchy foods, he said, would break down into sugar and end up as fat in our bodies, raising the risk of diabetes.

"We are used to eating for the sake of eating, such as during breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner, supper and late supper.

"We eat when our friends eat, when we watch movies or go out. But we don't need to eat so much," he said.

Dr Rajen likened the body to a car

that should not be overfilled with petrol.

"Our body needs the right kind of food and fuel. We can even go 'carb-less' for a meal every day," he said, pointing out that people should take smaller portions of simple carbs such as rice, noodles and bread and go for good carbs such as fruits and vegetables.

"Even if one is active and often goes to the gym, a blood test is recommended to ascertain a good blood sugar level."

As Malaysia is the "fattest" nation in Asia, he advised the sweet-toothed to "enjoy it slowly in smaller amounts".

"The pleasure of eating sweet things is for the tongue, so let it stay on the tongue for a long time," he said.

Dietician Fiona Lai Jie Wei also agreed that the increase in the number of diabetics was due to excessive intake of carbs among Malaysians.

"We should opt for complex carbs like brown rice, corn, barley and

other whole-grain food," she said.

Lai pointed out that many people were not aware they were pre-diabetic or diabetic until they undergo a simple blood sugar check.

"The symptoms of blood sugar problems include numbness of hands and feet, itchy skin, frequent hunger, frequent urination, energy crash, feeling sleepy and tired, sudden weight loss and a craving for sugary food," she said.

She urged Malaysians to practise moderation when it comes to sugar.

'Covid-19 severe on diabetics'

KJ: Normal glucose level can keep complications at bay

By ALLISON LAI
allison@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: One out of five Malaysians has diabetes, which makes them more susceptible to severe Covid-19 infections, says the Health Minister.

"The National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019 found that the percentage of diabetes patients in Malaysia had increased from 13.4% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2019.

"This report shows that one in five adults aged 18 and above in Malaysia lives with diabetes. It's equivalent to almost four million Malaysians," Khairy Jamaluddin said at the virtual launch of the War Against Diabetes campaign by

the Selangor Football Club (FC) and pharmaceutical company Sanofi Aventis Malaysia yesterday.

Also present at the event was Selangor Raja Muda Tengku Amir Shah, who is also Selangor FC chairman.

Khairy said diabetes also led to heart attacks, vision-related ailments such as glaucoma and cataracts, chronic kidney disease as well as nerve and dental problems.

He said people with diabetes were three to four times more likely to be infected with serious Covid-19 symptoms.

"Diabetes is not only associated with excessive sugar intake, but it is also closely linked to uncon-

trolled eating and unhealthy lifestyle practices.

"So it is important for all of us to maintain a healthy and balanced diet and adopt an active lifestyle," he said.

When it comes to exercise, he said there was no need to join expensive sports clubs or gyms or buy expensive equipment.

"Brisk walking is a good exercise besides jogging, cycling, swimming or doing aerobic exercises at home.

"Stop with the excuses; just do it," he said, adding that diet and exercise could control a person's weight and reduce sugar content in the bloodstream.

Khairy advised the people to ensure that their glucose level was

normal, failing which other health complications could set in.

"Do go for regular health check-ups to know your health status. For the B40 group, the government has come up with Peka B40, a free health screening initiative for families or individuals aged 40 and above," he said, adding that people should utilise this initiative to stay healthy.

He also urged parents to set a good example for their children by leading healthy lifestyles.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com



KJ: We're open to studies on medicinal CBD

PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry is open to collaboration on clinical studies on the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, says Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

Noting that there had been much discussion of late on medicinal marijuana, he said the ministry had been practising evidence-based policies.

"That's why we have welcomed clinical studies for the use of CBD (cannabidiol) for medicinal purposes," he said.

Khairy had said that the ministry welcomed clinical trials to ascertain the quality and efficacy of medical cannabis products in Malaysia.

"So far, there have been no full submissions for a clinical study/trial," he said in a Twitter posting, noting that there had been much expression of interest, talk and social media advocacy.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NATION

Malaysia's health literacy rate low

By ALIZA SHAH
 and IYLIA MARSYA ISKANDAR
 newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The generally low health literacy among Malaysians is contributing to the alarming rate of critical illnesses in the country, according to an expert.

Explaining this, a professor at the Tan Sri Omar Centre for STI (Science, Technology and Innovation) Policy Studies, Datuk Dr Ahmad Ibrahim, said poor health literacy was causing many Malaysians to fail to manage their illnesses well.

He said a recent two-country study titled *Respond* that looked at the incidence of hypertension among the B40 in Malaysia and the Philippines found that many still had a poor understanding of how to best manage hypertension.

"As part of efforts to share the findings from the study with the public, especially the B40 group, a

webinar was held.

"But judging from their questions, there are many who still have a poor understanding of how to best manage hypertension," said Prof Ahmad.

"Many of them thought hypertension can be cured. It can only be managed and they don't understand that it is a lifelong disease that requires you to be on medication forever."

The same study found that about 14% of B40 patients with hypertension are familiar with the illness, about 80% had some idea, while about 3% are ignorant about the illness.

Prof Ahmad said the issue of poor health literacy and lack of knowledge of other illnesses cut across all levels of Malaysian society.

Low health literacy in fact is more apparent with the Covid-19 pandemic, which brings forth very clear evidence when a segment of Malaysians is doubtful about the

efficacy of the vaccine, he said.

"(Poor health literacy) explains why people are hesitant to take the vaccination because they don't really understand and they can be influenced by stories on social media – stories such as the vaccines causing certain effects or that it can stay in them forever," he added.

The principal investigator of *Respond* from Universiti Teknologi Mara, Dr Nafiza Mat Nasir, said the study found that while hypertension patients were generally aware of their condition, they believed that it was not a "chronic illness".

"When we ask them about hypertension, they can provide us with answers and have the knowledge, there are some parts that they are a bit confused about, but overall their knowledge is good. The only thing is they didn't think that hypertension is a chronic illness."

"This is something that we should be concerned about because they might not manage their illness well

because of that," said the medical lecturer and family medicine expert.

Dr Nafiza said based on her experience, even with the knowledge, trying to convince patients to change their lifestyle was not easy.

Pahang health director Datuk Dr Nor Azimi Yunus said there were still pockets of the community in the state who were unaware of the Covid-19 vaccine's role and importance despite continuous awareness, education and advocacy being given by healthcare providers.

"Based on a study conducted by the Pahang State Health Department on PICKids (National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children) in February, almost 70% of respondents in the study agreed they had received information on the vaccine from the health ministry but only one-third of them agreed that the vaccine is effective."

"They would rather wait and see or they are too scared of the side effects as claimed by others."

Expert: Our health literacy likely to worsen due to fake news

PETALING JAYA: Malaysians' health literacy is predicted to worsen, given the amount of misinformation being spread on social media, says the Health Ministry's deputy director for the Non-Communicable Disease Section, Dr Feisul Idzwan Mustapha.

"The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019 found that in general, 35.1% of adults have low health literacy, 28% have low health literacy in managing medical issues, 32.3% have low health literacy related to disease prevention activities, while 27% have low health literacy in health promotion and healthy lifestyle practices."

"No survey has been done since then, and the next NHMS for non-communicable diseases (NCD) risk factors, including health literacy, will be conducted in 2023."

"My personal feeling (on health literacy) – it probably worsened, with so much misinformation on social media," said Dr Feisul, adding that health literacy was important as it provided one with the ability to find, understand and use health information and services needed for everyday decision-making.

"Low health literacy will cause difficulties in understanding and acting on medical information and instructions, protecting oneself against health risks, getting updates on health promotion, and living a healthy lifestyle."

"NCD patients, on the other hand, will face difficulty in adopting a healthy lifestyle. They won't come forward for regular health screening, they will not come for regular follow-up at the clinic, have low adherence to medications prescribed and lifestyle modification advice – ultimately, (leading to) poor health outcomes," he said.

Dr Feisul said the burden of NCD was high and continues to increase every year because Malaysians are not changing their behaviours to reduce exposure to NCD risk factors.

He said schools as well as parents had a role to play to improve the level of health literacy in the country.

"Education starts from young, and while schools have a role to play, I feel parents have a more important role to play – as role models."

"Always ask questions of your healthcare providers on disease prevention and management, and over-the-counter and prescription medications, vitamins and supplements."

"Bring someone with you, or when you accompany someone to clinic/hospital – to help with taking notes and remember important information such as appointment dates and specific instructions for self-care," he said.

Dr Feisul also emphasised the importance of verifying the authenticity of health-related information received, even from well-meaning friends and relatives, through social media platforms.

'Omicron XE on its way'

Experts predict the new variant could reach M'sia within a month

By ASHLEY TANG
 ashleytang@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Even as the country's daily Covid-19 cases are on a downturn, there is every possibility of the Omicron XE variant reaching our shores within a month, and posing a new danger.

According to Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman, the current Omicron variant arrived in Malaysia within a month or two even when the country's borders were closed.

In view of this, Dr Malina predicted that Omicron XE could arrive much faster as it has been detected in Thailand, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

"For the Omicron XE, theoretically it can arrive faster compared to the current Omicron variant, but we hope our surveillance can help to limit the spread," she said when contacted yesterday.

First detected in the United Kingdom on Jan 19, the Omicron XE variant, a mutation of the Omicron BA.1 and BA.2 strains, is said to be 10% more transmissible compared to the current variant.

Dr Malina said there was no indication that the Omicron XE variant was causing severe infections like the Delta variant, but noted that the risk was high for those who have yet to be vaccinated, or had no previous infection.

However, she believed that the situation would be under control as the country had good vaccination coverage, good adherence to protocols, and measures in place for travellers to limit the spread.

"What we have to focus on now is to ensure coverage of vaccines among those aged five to 11, booster shots to achieve coverage of at least 70% to 80%, and provision of specific care for children less than five-years-old as well as those unable to be vaccinated," she said.



Daily reminder: Experts noted that authorities should be on guard and increase surveillance as the Omicron XE variant is 10% more infectious compared to the current strain. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star

Volunteers for Community Engagement and Empowerment For Covid-19 chairman Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar also predicted that the new variant would arrive in less than a month due to higher domestic and international movements.

He said that continuous testing and variant identifications must be carried out, adding that the country's healthcare system would be able to handle a surge in cases, as more than 99% of the cases are from Categories One to Three.

"It is still resilient and robust," he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's consultant clinical microbiologist Prof Dr Zamberi Sekawi concurred, saying that the variant might enter the country at a much faster rate as the borders had reopened.

However, he said this variant would have to compete with the existing Omicron variant to be the dominant variant.

"According to reports, this variant is 10% more infectious," said Prof Zamberi.

He added that not much was known about the Omicron XE variant in terms of its severity, and whether it could evade the vaccines.

"If the character of this variant is the same as Omicron, then our healthcare system will be able to cope," he said, adding that authorities had to be on guard by increasing surveillance, not just for foreigners, but also locals.

The country first saw a surge in cases, hospitalisations, as well as deaths when the Delta variant hit the country last July.

On July 14, Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the Delta variant, first detected in India, was the dominant variant in the country then, with cases hitting a peak of 22,642 cases on Aug 25.

Subsequently, as cases fell, the country experienced another surge in cases at the beginning of January this year, which Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin had warned that the Omicron variant wave had begun in the country.

The Omicron variant was first reported in South Africa on Nov 24, 2021, and Malaysia detected its first Omicron variant case on Dec 2, 2021, involving a 19-year-old South African private university student in Ipoh who arrived from South Africa through Singapore on Nov 19.

AKHBAR : THE SUN

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

Tourist arrivals yet to pick up pace

► Govt needs strong marketing strategies, aggressive promotions to woo foreign visitors especially from China, say experts

■ BY SIVAA TANGAI RAJU
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The country's hospitality industry is still seeing a slowdown in international tourist arrivals even after borders were reopened. This is partly due to China's Zero-Covid policy and pandemic fears among travellers.

The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents said various travel restrictions in other countries and public opinion on travel safety have contributed to Malaysia's sluggish pace in attracting foreign visitors.

Its honorary treasurer and spokesman, Nigel Wong, said the country has to develop strong

tourism marketing strategies and hope that China would open its borders by next year.

"China has been and will be a major contributor to Malaysia's tourism arrivals.

"Although borders are open, we expect tourist arrivals to increase gradually due to a variety of factors, one of which is the Ukraine-Russia conflict. The industry is anticipating China's borders to open up towards the end of this year or early next year.

"There need to be an aggressive promotion of Malaysia as a fresh, safe and attractive destination. The government must help industry stakeholders reach out to target

markets on a business level, in tandem with national promotional initiatives," he said.

Malaysian Association of Hotels CEO Yap Lip Seng said stringent adherence to standard operating procedures (SOP) seems to be another reason for the country's slow arrival of international tourists.

He said the reopening of borders as of now has yet to record significant increase, with the exception of Singaporeans and Indonesians.

However, he emphasised that Sabah is counting on tourists from China in order to grow its gains from other markets, notably those in Asean countries.

"Prior to April 1, average

occupancy hovered between 30% and 40%. It fluctuated between peak weekends and holidays, and normal weekdays.

"Popular domestic destinations fared better than others. We are hoping for average occupancy of between 50% and 60% by Q3 (July, August and September).

"The obvious factor is that the SOP was only released days before April 1, and even that was not final. As of today, we are still receiving updates." Yap said during the pre-Covid period, China recorded over 160 million outbound travellers. This is the highest in the world and a market every country wants.

Knowing the SOP is crucial for travellers to plan, especially so during the current situation as the time taken to decide and plan can take a month to two for any traveller.

"Sabah will look forward to Chinese arrivals but at the same time,

it can also benefit from other markets, particularly the Asean countries."

The British Broadcasting Corporation recently reported that China's zero-Covid approach has become increasingly difficult to maintain due to the upsurge in the spread of Omicron variants throughout that country.

The zero-Covid approach states that travellers from and to China will be closely monitored as internal mobility is strictly limited, while visitors from other countries, with permission to enter China, will be checked and transferred to government-designated hotels for a mandatory two-week quarantine.

Tens of millions of people in China, including the country's main city and financial centre Shanghai, have been placed under lockdown.

As of April 1, there were about 54,000 new cases in China.

Be vigilant, continue to wear masks: Health DG

KUALA LUMPUR: Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah yesterday urged the public to remain vigilant during the transition to the endemic phase by wearing a face mask to prevent Covid-19 infections.

He said wearing a face mask was one of the preventive measures that could reduce the virus spread, especially in high-risk areas such as poorly ventilated indoor premises, crowded places, and places that allow close interactions.

Noor Hisham said Covid-19 is highly contagious and could result in deaths, especially among the elderly, children, as well as those with low immune system and with comorbidities.

He added the best practice would be to continue wearing face masks to minimise virus transmission.

"Wearing of face mask is important because of the possibility that some individuals are unaware they are infected as

they are asymptomatic," he said.

Noor Hisham reminded the public to wear their face mask properly by making sure the nose and mouth are completely covered. The full list of the standard operating procedures for wearing of face masks is available at www.mysop.gov.my.

As of Tuesday, the number of new cases remained below 15,000 for the fourth consecutive day at 12,017 cases, bringing the cumulative total to 4,268,486. - Bernama



More than 33,000 children fully vaccinated

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 33,621 children aged between five and 11 have completed two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children as of Tuesday.

Based on the CovidNOW website, a total of 1,353,774 children or 38.1% have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

A total of 15,876,357 adults or 67.5% have received the booster dose, while 22,954,326 or 97.6% have completed both doses and

23,231,749 or 98.8% have received one dose of the vaccine.

For adolescents aged between 12 and 17, a total of 2,854,230 or 91.7% have completed their vaccination, while 2,950,267 or 94.8% have received their first dose.

A total of 22,807 vaccine doses were dispensed on Tuesday, with 2,501 given as first dose, 8,670 as second dose and 11,636 as booster dose, bringing the cumulative number of doses administered under the

immunisation programme to 69,042,067.

According to Health Ministry's GitHub portal, a total of 33 deaths due to Covid-19 were reported on Tuesday, with Selangor recording the highest with eight deaths, followed by Perak (six), Kedah (four) and Sarawak (three).

Johor, Kelantan, Negri Sembilan, Pahang and Perlis recorded two cases each, while Penang and Kuala Lumpur recorded one each. - Bernama

Relief for PwD as Covid becomes endemic

KANGAR: Many persons with disabilities (PwD), who have been struggling to earn a living during the Covid-19 pandemic, welcome the transition to endemic phase, which began on April 1.

Visually-impaired Noor Jasmi Othman, 66, said when the country was hit by the pandemic, sales of her rattan handicraft dropped, and she only received a small number of orders compared with about 10 orders per month previously.

"I also faced difficulties obtaining rattan supplies to produce my handicraft items such as baskets, trays and picture frames.

"However, since the government announced that the country is transitioning into the endemic phase, the situation has improved and I started receiving orders from customers in Pahang, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor," she told Bernama after a breaking-of-fast event on Tuesday.

Perlis Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council CEO Mohd Nazim Mohd Noor officiated at the event that was organised by the Malaysian Foundation for the Blind (MFB) and Rumah Lavender, which is a transit house for PwD and single mothers.

Visually-impaired Remli Abas, 63, who works as a masseur, said the pandemic had affected his business.

"I may not receive many customers during Ramadan but I am confident the situation will return to normal and my regular customers will come and find me," said Remli, who receives the Social Welfare Department's assistance of RM450 a month.

During the event, MFB and Rumah Lavender also signed a memorandum of understanding to assist PwD in Perlis. - Bernama

Diabetics more likely to have severe symptoms

SHAH ALAM: Diabetics are three to four times more likely than others to have severe Covid-19 symptoms.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said there is a need to prevent the number of diabetics from increasing.

"Diabetes is not only associated with excessive sugar intake but is also closely linked to uncontrolled eating and unhealthy lifestyle," he said at the virtual Anti-Diabetes Campaign, organised by Selangor FC and pharmaceutical company Sanofi Avenis Malaysia yesterday.

Khairy reminded the public of the importance of adopting a healthy and balanced diet as well as practising an active lifestyle.

"Parents should also lead by example by getting their children involved in healthy lifestyle," he said.

Khairy added the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019 found that the percentage of diabetic patients has increased from 13.4% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2019.

"The report shows that one out of five individuals or nearly four million people, aged 18 and above, are living with diabetes. - Bernama