

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 1
RUANGAN : MUKA HADAPAN

Kes lebih 10,000, Malaysia dalam gelombang Omicron

Oleh Ahmad Suhael Adnan
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Kuala Lumpur: Kes harian COVID-19 kembali mencecah lebih 10,000 semalam, kali pertama dalam tempoh lebih empat bulan dengan Kementerian Kesihatan mengesahkan Malaysia kini sudah berada dalam gelombang baharu yang dicetuskan oleh varian Omicron.

Perkara itu disahkan Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin yang turut menjangkakan jumlah kes harian akan terus naik dan mencecah 15,000 tidak lama lagi.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah pula berkata kes harian COVID-19 berisiko melonjak sehingga lebih

20,000 menjelang akhir bulan depan, sekiranya kadar kebolehan-jangkitan (Rt) virus itu kekal pada 1.2.

Khairy berkata, berikutan serangan Omicron ketika ini, beliau bimbang terhadap sekitar satu juta warga emas yang masih belum mendapatkan dos penggalak, sekali gus berisiko mendapat komplikasi serius jika dijangkiti varian baharu COVID-19 itu.

Sehubungan itu, beliau menggesa orang ramai untuk memaklumkan kepada golongan warga emas dalam keluarga masing-masing untuk segera mendapatkan dos penggalak, bagi melindungi mereka daripada kesan buruk Omicron.

"Kita sudah sepenuhnya dalam gelombang Omicron. Kes akan

mencecah 15,000 tidak lama lagi.

"Masih ada satu juta warga emas yang tiada dos penggalak. Tolong maklum kepada orang-orang tua kesayangan anda untuk mendapat dos penggalak dengan segera," katanya menerusi Twitter, semalam.

Khairy mengulas unjuran model Pemerhatian dan Unjuran Kes Harian SEIR COVID-19 yang dimuat naik Dr Noor Hisham di akaun Twitter miliknya, semalam.

Model SEIR itu mengunjurkan kes harian COVID-19 berisiko melonjak sehingga kembali mencecah 22,000 kes menjelang hujung bulan depan, sekiranya kadar kebolehan-jangkitan (Rt) virus itu kekal pada 1.2.

Bagaimanapun, Dr Noor Hi-

sham yakin tahap keparahan wabak itu dapat dikurangkan walaupun kes bakal melonjak tinggi, berikutan kadar vaksinasi dan dos penggalak yang tinggi.

Beliau memaklumkan nilai Rt di Malaysia kini sudah mencecah 1.2 semalam berbanding 1.13 kelmarin, dengan empat negeri merekodkan nilai Rt melebihi purata kebangsaan.

Data dimuat naik di Twitter Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan itu menunjukkan Perlis mencatat nilai Rt tertinggi semalam dengan 1.49, disusuli Sabah (1.41), Putrajaya (1.29) dan Kedah 1.22, manakala Pulau Pinang dan Sarawak merekodkan 1.17.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Pakar optimis 'mimpi ngeri' tahun lalu tidak berulang

Lonjakan kes tak jejas sistem kesihatan awam disebabkan liputan vaksinasi tinggi ketika ini

Oleh Ahmad Suhail Adnan
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Kuala Lumpur: Pakar epidemiologi dan virologi tempatan, mengunjurkan kes harian COVID-19 akan terus melonjak dalam tempoh dua hingga tiga minggu akan datang, susulan penularan varian Omicron yang semakin dominan di negara ini.

Bagaimanapun, mereka percaya mimpi ngeri pada pertengahan tahun lalu yang menyaksikan hospital dan unit rawatan rapi (ICU) seluruh negara hampir kemuncak, tidak akan berulang, meskipun kes harian melonjak tinggi.

Pakar kesihatan awam (epidemiologi dan biostatistik) Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Prof Madya Dr Malina Osman, opti-

mis situasi tahun lalu tidak akan berulang berikutan liputan vaksinasi di Malaysia yang tinggi ketika ini.

Katanya, ia terbukti apabila jumlah kemasukan pesakit COVID-19 ke hospital, ICU dan kes kematian masih dalam pola menurun ketika ini, walaupun jumlah kes harian sudah melonjak sejak lebih dua minggu lalu.

"Secara umum, situasi semasa tidak begitu mencemaskan berbanding ketika gelombang jangkitan Delta tahun lalu serta ketika kita belum ada vaksin COVID-19.

"Kita lihat sekarang tahap keparahan kes COVID-19 dan magnitud bebanan penyakit ini tidak seperti pada 2020 dan tahun lalu, berdasarkan jumlah kes di hospital, ICU dan kematian semasa.

"Namun, kita tidak boleh ambil ringan Omicron kerana kadar kebolehjangkitannya adalah tiga hingga empat kali ganda lebih tinggi daripada Delta dan ini memberi ancaman kepada individu yang belum menerima vaksin.

"Di Amerika Syarikat (AS) dan Eropah, data menunjukkan individu yang belum divaksinasi masih mendapat komplikasi serius dan terdedah pada kematian apa-

bila dijangkiti Omicron," katanya kepada BH, semalam.

Beliau mengulas lonjakan kes harian COVID-19 kepada lebih 10,000 kes semalam, selepas berlegar sekitar 2,000 hingga 3,000 kes selama lebih lima minggu mulai pertengahan Disember tahun lalu, dipercayai akibat varian Omicron.

Bagaimanapun, lonjakan itu dilihat tidak menjejaskan sistem kesihatan awam setakat ini, apabila kadar penggunaan ICU hospital, kes kematian dan jumlah pesakit COVID-19 yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan masih dalam pola menurun.

Setakat semalam, 97.9 peratus atau lebih 22.9 juta penduduk berusia 18 tahun ke atas di Malaysia sudah lengkap divaksinasi dengan 52.6 peratus atau lebih 12.3 juta penduduk dewasa sudah menerima dos penggalak.

Selain itu, 88.7 peratus atau lebih 2.79 juta remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun pula sudah lengkap divaksinasi.

Dr Malina menjangkakan kes harian COVID-19 akan terus melonjak dalam tempoh dua minggu akan datang, sehingga liputan vaksin COVID-19 kepada kanak-kanak dan dos penggalak masing-masing mencecah sekurang-kurangnya 70 peratus.

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Dr Malina Osman,
Pakar kesihatan awam
(epidemiologi dan biostatistik) UPM

ngan 11 kematian berbanding kes melonjak kepada lebih 9,000 pada Jumaat lalu. Peratusan ini amat rendah," katanya.

Selain faktor vaksinasi yang tinggi, beliau percaya jangkitan semasa tidak separah tahun lalu kerana Omicron lebih cenderung menyerang sistem pernafasan atas seperti tekak dan anak tekak, berbanding paru-paru.

Namun, katanya, dos penggalak masih diperlukan, khususnya bagi meningkatkan kembali tahap tindak balas peneutralan antibodi, yang menurun selepas tiga hingga enam bulan daripada tarikh pengambilan dos kedua vaksin.

"Selain itu, masih ada kemungkinan kemunculan varian baharu sepanjang tempoh pandemik ini, jadi dos penggalak adalah kaedah yang signifikan untuk melindungi kita daripada kesan jangkitan yang teruk," katanya.

10,089 kes baharu tertinggi dalam tempoh 127 hari

Dari Muka 1

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, menjadi tanggungjawab semua orang untuk mematuhi garis panduan kesihatan awam dan sosial yang ditetapkan KKM untuk mengawal peningkatan kes, selain peningkatan liputan vaksinasi dan dos penggalak juga boleh mengurangkan penularan serta menurunkan Rt kepada kurang daripada 1.

Kementerian Kesihatan melaporkan 10,089 kes baharu COVID-19, semalam, menjadikan kes kumulatif kini berjumlah 2,914,220 kes.

Jangkitan baharu yang dilaporkan semalam yang tertinggi dalam 127 hari, kali terakhir mencecah lina angka pada 2 Oktober tahun lalu, iaitu 10,915 kes.

Daripada 10,089 kes baharu semalam, Selangor merekodkan 2,549 kes, diikuti Johor (1,582), Sabah (1,285), Kedah (904), Pahang

(624), Pulau Pinang (542), Kuala Lumpur (491), Kelantan (471), Negeri Sembilan (464), Melaka (457), Perak (321), Terengganu (213), Putrajaya (61), Sarawak (58), Perlis (44) dan Labuan (23).

Pola peningkatan semula kes harian mula dilihat pada 21 Januari lalu dengan 4,046 kes dicatatkan, sebelum melonjak kepada 5,439 kes pada 27 Januari, 7,234 kes pada 4 Februari, 9,117 kes kelmarin dan 10,089 kes semalam.

Setakat 25 Januari lalu, KKM merekodkan 601 kes varian Omicron yang amat mudah berjangkit di negara ini, dengan 579 daripadanya dikategorikan sebagai kes sporadik.

Malaysia kali pertama mengesan kes positif COVID-19 varian Omicron pada 2 Disember lalu, membabitkan pelajar warga asing yang tiba ke Malaysia dari Afrika Selatan melalui Singapura pada 19 November tahun lalu.

Dalam pada itu, data semasa portal COVIDNOW juga menunjukkan kadar vaksinasi yang tinggi mampu mengurangkan risiko pesakit COVID-19 dimasukkan ke hospital dan unit rawatan rapi (ICU) serta kematian dengan mengambil Sarawak sebagai contoh.

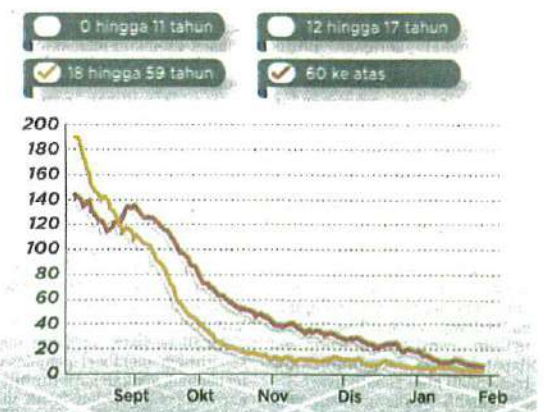
Sarawak yang mencatatkan kadar vaksinasi lengkap hampir 92 peratus bagi individu dewasa berusia 18 tahun ke atas dan hampir 89 peratus bagi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun, terbukti berjaya mengurangkan kes parah disebabkan kadar vaksinasi tinggi.

Negeri itu hanya mencatatkan 42 kes semalam dan tiada lonjakan dalam kes kematian serta kemasukan ke ICU dan pesakit yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan.

Malah, sejak 7 Januari lalu, tiada sebarang kes kematian akibat COVID-19 dicatatkan di Sarawak dan hanya seorang pesakit

Kematian mengikut kumpulan umur

Data pada 5 Februari 2022



yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan ketika ini.

Kemasukan pesakit COVID-19 ke ICU juga terus menunjukkan penurunan dengan hanya empat kes aktif di wad itu ketika ini, dan kadar penggunaan wad bagi pe-

sakit COVID-19 hanya 4.4 peratus.

Setakat semalam, seramai 12,307,360 individu atau 52.6 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di negara ini telah menerima dos penggalak COVID-19.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Omicron punca kes harian melonjak melebihi 10,000

Serangan varian baharu dapat dikurangkan jika dapat dos penggalak

Oleh Ahmad Suhail Adnan
 ahmad.suhail@bh.com.my

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia secara rasmi sudah berada sepenuhnya dalam gelombang baharu COVID-19 yang dicituskan varian Omicron, dengan kes harian kini melonjak melebihi 10,000 semalam.

Situasi itu diumumkan Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, yang menjangkakan jumlah kes harian akan terus melonjak dan mencecah 15,000 tidak lama lagi.

Berikutan serangan Omicron ketika ini, beliau meyarakan kebimbangan terhadap kira-kira satu juta warga emas yang belum mendapatkan dos penggalak, sekali gus berisiko mendapatkan komplikasi serius jika dijangkiti varian baharu COVID-19 itu.

Sehubungan itu, beliau mengesakan orang ramai untuk segera memaklumkan kepada golongan warga emas dalam keluarga masing-masing untuk segera mendapatkan dos penggalak, bagi melindungi golongan itu daripada kesan buruk Omicron.

"Kita sudah sepenuhnya dalam gelombang Omicron. Kes akan mencecah 15,000 tidak lama lagi.



Petugas perubatan memberikan suntikan dos penggalak kepada penerima di PPV Offsite Dewan Ang Si Chong, Georgetown. (Foto Daniel Saad/BH)

"Masih ada satu juta warga emas yang tiada dos penggalak. Tolong maklum kepada orang-orang tua kesayangan anda untuk mendapat dos penggalak dengan segera," katanya menerusi Twitter, semalam.

Beliau mengulas unjuran model Pemerhatian dan Unjuran Kes Harian SEIR COVID-19 yang dimuat naik Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, di Twitter.

Model SEIR itu mengunjurkan kes harian COVID-19 berisiko melonjak sehingga kembali mencecah lebih 20,000 kes menjelang hujung bulan depan, sekiranya kadar kebolehanjangkitan (Rt) virus itu kekal pada 1.2.

Bagaimanapun, Dr Noor Hisham yakin tahap parah wabak itu dapat dikurangkan walaupun kes bakal melonjak tinggi, berikutan kadar vaksinasi dan dos penggalak yang tinggi.

Terdahulu, beliau memaklumkan nilai Rt di Malaysia sudah mencecah 1.2 semalam, berbanding 1.13 kelmarin, dengan empat

negeri merekodkan nilai Rt melebihi purata kebangsaan.

Dalam pada itu, data semasa di portal COVIDNOW membuktikan kadar vaksinasi yang tinggi mampu mengurangkan risiko pesakit COVID-19 dimasukkan ke hospital dan unit rawatan rapi (ICU) serta kematian.

Ketika ini, Sarawak mencatatkan kadar vaksinasi lengkap hampir 92 peratus bagi individu dewasa berusia 18 tahun ke atas dan hampir 89 peratus bagi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun.

Negeri itu mencatatkan peningkatan kes harian COVID-19 sejak beberapa hari lalu kepada 42 kes semalam, namun tiada lonjakan dalam kes kematian serta kemasukan ke ICU dan pesakit yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan.

Sejak 7 Januari lalu, tiada sebarang kes kematian akibat COVID-19 dicatatkan di Sarawak dan hanya seorang pesakit yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan ketika ini.

Dua lagi kluster pendidikan dikesan di Negeri Sembilan

Seremban: Dua lagi kluster pendidikan COVID-19 dikesan di Negeri Sembilan membabitkan sekolah menengah di Tampin dan prasekolah di Jempol, dekat sini.

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Bertindak Kesihatan, Kepenggunaan dan Alam Sekitar Negeri Sembilan, S Veerapan, berkata Kluster Jalan Bakti membabitkan pelajar Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Tuanku Abdul Rahman di Tampin, manakala Kluster Taman Seriting Jaya, murid prasekolah di Jempol.

Katanya, seramai 16 pelajar sekolah menengah berkenaan disahkan positif COVID-19.

"Kluster Jalan Bakti itu bermula selepas saringan pelajar bergejala dilakukan terhadap 54 pelajar yang disaring sehingga jam 12 tengah hari kelmarin, sebelum 16 daripada mereka didapati positif COVID-19.

"Kesemua kontak rapat kes juga dikenal pasti dan mereka diberi surat kuarantin wajib," katanya ketika dihubungi, di sini, semalam.

Beliau berkata, Kluster Taman Seriting Jaya pula dikesan pada Jumaat lalu selepas saringan bergejala terhadap kakitangan di Taman Didikan Kanak-Kanak (Tadika) berkenaan.

Katanya, sebanyak 25 kes positif wabak berkenaan dilaporkan membabitkan enam kakitangan, 12 murid dan tujuh kontak rapat murid, sehingga Jumaat lalu.

"Kesemua kontak rapat kes juga telah diasing dan dikuarantin," katanya.

Sebelum ini, Negeri Sembilan merekodkan seramai 743 pelajar sekolah dan institusi pendidikan positif COVID-19 membabitkan 11 kluster pendidikan di negeri itu sehingga akhir bulan lalu.

Sementara itu di Sarawak, Pengarah Institut Kesihatan dan Perubatan Komuniti

(IHCM) Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Profesor Dr David Perera, berkata Omicron kini menggantikan Delta sebagai varian paling dominan di negeri itu.

Beliau berkata, kadar pengesanan 78 peratus Omicron ditemui daripada data pengawasan kes positif yang dijalankan di antara 3 hingga 26 Januari lalu.

Beliau berkata, pengesanan itu adalah hasil ujian terhadap 58 sampel yang diambil dalam tempoh itu.

"Daripada jumlah itu, 45 varian Omicron dikesan, manakala 13 lagi adalah varian Delta VoG. Varian Omicron dikesan dalam sampel diambil di Kuching, Samarahan, Sibul, Kapit, Mukah dan Miri.

"Kadar pengesanan 78 peratus menunjukkan bahawa Omicron kini menggantikan Delta sebagai varian dominan di Sarawak," katanya dalam laporan terbaharu kepada Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Negeri (JPBN) Sarawak, Datuk Amar Douglas Ugah Embas, semalam.

Dr David berkata, kebanyakan kes itu dikesan berlaku melalui penularan dalam komuniti.

Berikutan peningkatan semula kes positif COVID-19 di negara ini, beliau yang juga ahli Kumpulan Penasihat Vaksin COVID-19 Sarawak (SCOVAG), menasihatkan orang ramai yang belum menerima dos penggalak supaya mendapatkannya segera.

Ini kerana katanya, kajian menunjukkan dos penggalak perlu untuk meningkatkan penurunan paras antibodi untuk melindungi daripada jangkitan Omicron.

Peningkatan semula kes positif COVID-19 direkodkan di Sarawak kelmarin apabila sebanyak 42 kes dilaporkan, berbanding 22 kes pada hari sebelumnya.

Warga emas perlu segera dapatkan dos penggalak

Kuala Lumpur: Warga emas perlu mendapatkan suntikan dos penggalak secepat mungkin, bagi mengekang risiko kematian yang masih tinggi dalam kalangan usia berkenaan, jika terkena jangkitan varian Omicron COVID-19.

Pakar perubatan keluarga, Dr Amirul Amzar, berkata unjuran peningkatan kes sehingga mencecah 15,000 dalam tempoh terdekat adalah disebabkan keha-

diran varian Omicron.

Melihat pengalaman negara luar menghadapi Omicron, beliau mengakui, bahawa kes komplikasi kesihatan sekiranya dijangkiti varian membimbangkan (VOC) itu kurang teruk berbanding Delta, khususnya mereka yang sudah lengkap vaksin dan menerima dos penggalak.

"Namun, risiko kematian masih tinggi pada warga emas kita. Kalau ada ibu ayah, atau atuk

nenek umur 60 ke atas, tolong bawa mereka dapatkan dos penggalak.

"Dos penggalak melindungi mereka daripada jangkitan serius dan kematian, insya-Allah.

"Kalau tengok graf di covidnow.com, kematian warga emas umur 60 ke atas adalah lebih tinggi daripada golongan lebih muda.

"Jika tengok pulak kematian ikut status vaksinasi, yang sudah terima dos penggalak lagi rendah

risiko kematian. Ini pengamatan berdasarkan data sedia ada.

"Ia menjadi ilmu untuk panduan kita. Bila ada ilmu, kita buat keputusan berasaskan ilmu ini dan berdoa akan kebaikan selepas usaha ini. Inilah konsep tawakal sebenar," katanya menerusi kenyataan, semalam.

Terdahulu, Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, menjangkakan kes harian COVID-19 bakal mencecah 15,000 tidak lama lagi,

memandangkan Malaysia kini sudah sepenuhnya berdepan dengan gelombang Omicron.

Susulan kebimbangan itu, beliau menyarankan kepada seramai sejuta warga emas yang belum menerima dos penggalak untuk mendapatkan suntikan masing-masing di kemudahan kesihatan berhampiran, bagi mengekang risiko kemasukan ke hospital dan unit rawatan rapi (ICU).

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 9

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

KKM nafi syor warga emas tak undi

Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menafikan pihaknya mengeluarkan saranan supaya warga emas tidak keluar mengundi pada Pilihan Raya Negeri (PRN) Johor.

Sehubungan itu, kementerian berkenaan berharap orang ramai tidak menyebarkan maklumat

palsu yang dikesan mula tersebar di media sosial baru-baru ini.

"KKM tidak pernah mengeluarkan saranan kesihatan PRN Johor seperti yang disebar di media sosial baru-baru ini.

"Orang ramai diharap tidak menyebarkan maklumat palsu ini," katanya menerusi kenyataan,

semalam.

Menurut tangkap layar menggunakan jata Malaysia dan nama KKM tersebar di aplikasi media sosial, mengenai individu berusia 60 tahun disarankan supaya tidak keluar mengundi bagi mencegah penyebaran COVID-19 kalangan warga emas.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 11

RUANGAN : KOMENTAR

Tingkatkan keyakinan ibu bapa jayakan PICKkids

Oleh Dr Mohd Rahim Khamis
dan Mohd Faizal Kamarudin
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Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) kepada kanak-kanak berusia 5 hingga 11 tahun melalui PICKkids, dibuat berdasarkan senario semasa jangkitan COVID 19 dalam kalangan golongan itu adalah membimbangkan.

Oleh itu, Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) membuka pendaftaran kepada ibu bapa dan penjaga untuk mendaftar anak dengan rekod sehingga 1 Februari lalu menunjukkan kira-kira 15 peratus daripada 3.6 juta kanak-kanak seluruh negara layak menerima suntikan vaksin untuk mendaftar. Dibandingkan peraturan mendaftar dengan jumlah kanak-kanak layak, ia boleh dikatakan mungkin sedikit rendah-hingga perlu ditangani segera.

Isu utama perlu diberi perhatian adalah keterbukaan dan kesanggupan ibu bapa atau penjaga memberi kebenaran untuk anak divaksin. Sudah semestinya kegelisahan dan kegusaran ibu bapa serta penjaga adalah kepada isu kesan sampingan vaksin ke atas kanak-kanak.

Sebenarnya, kesan sampingan paling kerap diterima kanak-kanak divaksin berdasarkan pengamal perubatan ialah sakit pada lengan, demam atau keletihan yang turut dirasakan dewasa dan remaja

sebelum ini.

Bagaimanapun, kesan sampingan seperti ini tetap membuatkan ibu bapa dan penjaga menjadi serba salah untuk mendaftar anak kerana bimbang ia bukan hanya sementara tetapi berlarutan dalam jangka panjang hingga menyebabkan tiada pendaftaran atau temujanji dibuat. Mereka lebih mengambil pendekatan tunggu dan lihat hingga betul-betul yakin.

Hakikatnya, ibu bapa atau penjaga kanak-kanak perlu memikirkan apakah kesan kepada kanak-kanak

nak sekiranya tidak divaksin seperti orang dewasa dan remaja. Mereka akan terdedah kepada virus itu dan mudah dijangkiti.

Sudah semestinya kita tidak mahu anak menjadi mangsa COVID-19 kerana masa depan mereka masih jauh. Apatah lagi dengan corak peningkatan daripada kluster pendidikan akhir-akhir ini, sudah semestinya anak amat perlu diberikan vaksin sebagai perlindungan.

Namun, kita harus mengakui penyebaran pelbagai berita palsu berkaitan kesan vaksin ke atas kanak-kanak antara punca kegusaran ibu bapa atau penjaga.

Justeru, Pihak berwajib perlu menyekat dan memastikan tiada penyebaran berita palsu berkaitan vaksin dengan kanak-kanak disebarkan sewenang-wenangnya.

Oleh itu, langkah terbaik dalam merancang lagi PICKkids ini untuk mencapai objektifnya sudah semestinya sokongan dan keyakinan ibu bapa serta penjaga kanak-kanak itu sendiri.

Sekiranya mereka lebih berfikir terbuka dan melihat faedah vaksin berbanding kesan sampingan bersifat sementara sudahnya semestinya PICKkids akan berjaya.

Pada masa sama, kerajaan disyorkan tidak menggunakan pendekatan seperti penguatkuasaan undang-undang sekiranya ia kurang mendapat sambutan, sebaliknya cukup dengan perkongsian maklumat secara komprehensif dalam menarik keterbukaan dan sokongan ibu bapa serta penjaga kanak-kanak.



Hanya 15 peratus daripada 3.6 juta kanak-kanak mendaftar untuk divaksin sehingga 1 Februari lalu.

(Foto hiasan)



Pensyarah
Universiti Teknologi
MARA (UTM)
Puncak Alam

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 8
RUANGAN : COVID-19

Virus tersebar di majlis kahwin

Warga emas cetus kluster babit dua buah kampung

Kota Kinabalu: Seorang warga emas yang menghadiri majlis perkahwinan di dua buah kampung dalam Daerah Beaufort didapati mencetuskan satu kluster komuniti iaitu Kluster Kampung Weston.

Menteri Kerajaan Tempatan dan Perumahan Sabah

Datuk Masidi Manjun berkata, kes indeks merupakan lelaki berusia 66 tahun yang hadir ke majlis perkahwinan di Kampung Lubok dan Kampung Menengah Weston pada 29 dan 30 Januari lepas.

"Kluster jenis komuniti yang melibatkan Daerah

Beaufort dan Penampang dikesan selepas kes indeks bergejala demam, batuk dan sakit badan sejak 30 Januari sebelum disahkan positif Covid-19 pada 3 Februari melalui saringan bergejala di Klinik Kesihatan Penampang," katanya, kelmarin.

Masidi berkata, saringan terhadap 37 kontak rapat mendapati tiga kes kontak serumah dikesan positif menjadikan kumulatif bagi kluster ini adalah 27 kes termasuk 22 kes baharu yang dilaporkan kelmarin dan semua kes diasingkan untuk rawatan selanjutnya.

Omicron kini jadi varian dominan di Sarawak

Kuching: Varian Omicron kini menggantikan Delta sebagai varian Covid-19 paling dominan di Sarawak.

Pengarah Institut Kesihatan dan Perubatan Komuniti (IHCM) Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas)

Profesor Dr David Perera berkata, kadar pengesanan 78 peratus Omicron ditemui daripada data pengawasan kes positif dijalankan 3 Januari hingga 26 Januari. Beliau berkata, pengesanan itu adalah hasil ujian

terhadap 58 sampel yang diambil dalam tempoh itu.

"Daripada jumlah itu, 45 varian Omicron dikesan manakala 13 lagi adalah varian Delta VoG. Kadar pengesanan 78 peratus menunjukkan Omicron kini

menggantikan Delta sebagai varian dominan," katanya.

Beliau mendedahkan perkara itu dalam laporan kepada Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Negeri Sarawak, Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas.

12,307,360 terima dos penggalak

Kuala Lumpur: Sebanyak 12,307,360 atau 52.6 peratus individu dewasa di negara ini sudah menerima dos penggalak Covid-19 setakat kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data di laman web COVIDNOW, sejumlah 22,929,020 individu atau 97.9 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di Malaysia melengkapkan vaksinasi mereka manakala 99.2 peratus atau 23,222,612 individu menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi remaja berumur antara 12 dan 17 tahun, sejumlah 2,791,080 individu atau 88.7 peratus daripada kumpulan itu melengkapkan vaksinasi, manakala 2,868,945 individu atau 91.2 peratus sudah menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi vaksinasi harian pula, sebanyak 73,328 dos di-



berikan kelmarin meliputi 15,673 dos pertama, 782 sebagai dos kedua dan 56,873 dos penggalak, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif dos vaksin yang diberikan di bawah Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) sebanyak 63,914,165 dos.

Sementara itu, menurut portal Github Kementerian Kesihatan, 14 kematian akibat Covid-19 dilaporkan kelmarin dengan lima di Selangor, empat di Sabah, dua di Kuala Lumpur manakala satu kematian direkodkan di Johor, Negeri Sembilan dan Perak.

Jangkitan Covid-19 lempi 10,000 kes

Kuala Lumpur: Kes baharu Covid-19 terus menunjukkan peningkatan dengan 10,089 kes dilaporkan semalam berbanding 9,117 kes, kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, angka terbaharu itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes di Malaysia mencecah 2,914,220 kes setakat ini.

Menurutnya, Selangor merekodkan kes tertinggi dengan 2,549 kes diikuti Johor (1,582 kes), Sabah (1,285 kes), Kedah (904 kes), Pahang (624 kes), Pulau Pinang (542 kes), Kuala Lumpur (491 kes), Kelantan (471 kes), Negeri Sembilan (464 kes) dan Melaka (457 kes).

"Perak pula mencatatkan 321 kes diikuti Terengganu (213 kes), Putrajaya (61 kes), Sarawak (58 kes), Perlis (44 kes) dan Labuan (23 kes)," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, gelombang Omicron sudah sampai ke rantau ini dan seperti yang dijangkakan dapat dilihat peningkatan kes di Singapura, Indonesia,

Thailand dan lain-lain.

"Apa yang penting ialah kesiapsiagaan kita iaitu meningkatkan liputan vaksinasi dan pemberian dos penggalak kepada mereka berusia 18 tahun ke atas.

"Kita juga sudah mencapai liputan vaksinasi remaja lebih 90 peratus dan kini kepada kanak-kanak," katanya.

Beliau berkata, dengan vaksin, kes parah semakin berkurangan dan semalam walaupun angka melebihi 10,000 kes, tahap 4 dan 5 hanya 25 kes.

"Orang ramai disarankan untuk patuh kepada prosedur operasi standard terutama pemakaian pelitup muka dengan betul dan dapatkan dos penggalak.

"Insya-Allah kita akan melalui gelombang Omicron ini tidak seperti sebelum liputan vaksinasi," katanya.

Kali terakhir Malaysia merekodkan kes baharu Covid-19 melebihi paras 10,000 adalah pada tarikh 2 Oktober lalu iaitu 10,915 kes.



MOHD Hareez Mohd Hafni, 37, cuba menenangkan anaknya Ali Imran, 9, semasa menerima suntikan vaksin di PPV Offsite IOI City Tower 1, kelmarin.

Program PICKids Pulau Pinang bermula

Georgetown: Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-kanak (PICKids) di Pulau Pinang bermula hari ini membabitkan mereka yang mempunyai komorbid dan penyakit berisiko tinggi.

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Kesihatan, Pertanian, Industri Asas Tani dan Pembangunan Luar Bandar negeri Dr Norlela Ariffin berkata, lokasi pemberian vaksinasi bagi golongan itu di bahagian pulau adalah di Hospital Pulau Pinang (HPP) manakala di bahagian Seberang Perai membabitkan Hospital Seberang

Jaya (HSJ).

"Setakat ini, dua hospital ini sahaja yang dikhaskan untuk pemberian vaksin bagi golongan kanak-kanak 5 hingga 12 tahun yang mempunyai komorbid dan berisiko tinggi.

"Bagi kanak-kanak yang tidak mempunyai penyakit dan bukan komorbid pemberian vaksin akan dilakukan di klinik kesihatan atau sekolah yang ia dibawah pengurusan kesihatan awam," ka-

tanya di sini, semalam.

Katanya, mengikut data jabatan perangkaan mendapati populasi kanak-kanak 5 hingga 11 tahun di Pulau Pinang adalah sebanyak 160,000 orang.

Dalam perkembangan lain, Norlela berkata, terdapat 19 kluster aktif Covid-19 dikesan sehingga semalam ini yang paling banyak adalah membabitkan kluster pendidikan.

"Setakat ini terdapat 12

kluster pendidikan dikesan, (3) sektor perkilangan, (3) tempat kerja dan (1) pusat tahanan selain terdapat satu kluster baharu membabitkan Kem Tentera Sungai Ara di daerah barat daya.

"Bilangan kes positif Covid-19 yang direkodkan pula kebanyakannya adalah membabitkan varian Delta disusuli Omicron dan Beta," katanya.

Situasi Covid-19 di Pulau Pinang kini mencatatkan jumlah kumulatif kes sebanyak 169,852 dengan pertambahan 522 kes baharu kelmarin.

Pemberian vaksin akan dilakukan di klinik kesihatan atau sekolah
Dr Norlela

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 9
RUANGAN : COVID-19

Hospital USM buka zon Ili, Sari

Kota Bharu: Jabatan Kecemasan dan Trauma Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) mewujudkan zon tambahan iaitu zon *Influenza Like Illness* (Ili) dan *Severe Acute Respiratory Illness* (Sari) bagi rawatan masalah saluran pernafasan untuk mengurangkan risiko penularan Covid-19.

Pakar Jabatan Perubatan Kecemasan dan Trauma Hospital USM Dr Ariff Arithra Abdullah berkata, jabatan kecemasan boleh dianggap sebagai lokaliti utama memberi rawatan awal kepada pesakit bagi kes kecemasan sebelum dipindahkan ke bahagian lain.

Katanya, jabatan itu berfungsi memberi rawatan kecemasan kepada pesakit dari kaunter triage bagi menentukan kemasukan ke zon merah, kuning atau hijau.

"Disebabkan negara masih bergelut dengan pandemik Covid-19, maka

Jabatan Kecemasan dan Trauma Hospital USM mengambil langkah mewujudkan zon tambahan iaitu zon Ili dan Sari.

"Zon Ili diwujudkan untuk merawat kes jangkitan saluran pernafasan yang tidak kritikal manakala zon Sari bagi kes separa kritikal dan kritikal," katanya dalam kenyataan di sini.

Katanya, beban tugas meskipun bertambah sejak penularan Covid-19, namun ia tidak pernah melunturkan semangat paramedik untuk memberi perawatan terbaik kepada pesakit.

"Bagi memastikan tidak ada pesakit terdedah kepada jangkitan Covid-19 semasa menerima rawatan di jabatan kecemasan, kami berpesan supaya perlu mematuhi prosedur operasi standard (SOP).

"Semua petugas juga perlu sentiasa memakai pemakaian kelengkapan perlindungan peribadi (PPE)," katanya.

Zon Ili
diwujudkan untuk
rawat kes jangkitan
saluran pernafasan
tidak kritikal

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : NEGARA

Dua lagi kluster pendidikan terdeteksi di N. Sembilan

SEREMBAN – Dua lagi kluster pendidikan dikesan di negeri ini membabitkan sebuah sekolah menengah di Tampin dan prasekolah di Jempol menjadikan keseluruhan 22 kluster masih belum diisytiharkan tamat di negeri ini.

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Bertindak Kesihatan, Alam Sekitar, Koperasi dan Kepenggunaan negeri, S. Veerapan berkata, dua kluster itu ialah Kluster Jalan Bakti di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Tuanku Abdul Rahman di Gemas (Tampin) dan Kluster Taman Setting Jaya membabitkan sebuah prasekolah di Jempol.

Menurutnya, bagi Kluster Jalan Bakti, ia bermula dengan saringan pelajar bergejala dan

sehingga 12 tengah hari semalam, seramai 54 pelajar telah disaring.

"Sebanyak 16 pelajar dikesan positif, manakala baki 38 pelajar lagi negatif. Kesemua kontak rapat kes telah dikenal pasti dan telah menjalani saringan dan mereka telah diberi surat kuarantin wajib."

"Proses disinfeksi sekolah telah dijalankan bagi tujuan keselamatan pelajar serta warga sekolah," katanya dalam satu kenyataan semalam.

Veerapan berkata, bagi Kluster Taman Setting Jaya, ia dilaporkan kelmarin melibatkan tadika di daerah Jempol.

Menurut beliau, kluster berkenaan bermula dengan saringan bergejala kakitangan di tadika

tersebut.

"Sehingga kelmarin, sebanyak 25 kes positif telah dilaporkan dalam kluster ini iaitu enam orang kakitangan, 12 pelajar dan tujuh kontak rapat pelajar."

"Kesemua kontak rapat kes telah diasing dan dikuarantin," katanya.

Pada akhir bulan lalu, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah dilaporkan berkata, kluster pendidikan terus mendominasi penularan Covid-19 di negara ini.

Katanya, daripada 106 kluster yang dikesan bagi tempoh minggu epidemiologi ke empat yang bermula dari 23 sehingga 29 Januari, 81 atau 76.4 peratus adalah kluster pendidikan.



PAKAR-PAKAR kesihatan menyarankan hanya pelajar kelas peperiksaan yang perlu hadir ke sekolah bagi mengekang penularan Covid-19.
— GAMBAR HIASAN

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NEGARA

Jangkaan dibuat berdasarkan kadar kebolehjangkitan kes Covid-19 semasa

Kes harian cecah 22,000 akhir Mac



ORANG ramai diminta supaya mematuhi SOP yang ditetapkan dalam usaha mengekang penularan jangkitan Covid-19.

Oleh SITI A'ISYAH SUKAIMI

PUTRAJAYA – Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menjangkakan kes jangkitan Covid-19 boleh mencecah sehingga 22,000 sehari menjelang akhir Mac ini.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, jangkaan itu dibuat adalah berdasarkan kadar kebolehjangkitan (Rt) atau R-naught (Ro) 1.2 yang dicatatkan kelmarin.

Jangkitan Covid-19 dijangka mencecah angka 22,000 pada hujung Mac sekiranya Rt kekal 1.2.

Bellau meminta orang ramai supaya mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga dan mematuhi prosedur operasi standard (SOP) yang telah ditetapkan oleh KKM.

"Adalah menjadi tanggungjawab kita untuk mematuhi se-

mua langkah kesihatan dan sosial serta meningkatkan liputan vaksinasi serta dos penggalak bagi mengurangkan jangkitan dan menurunkan nilai Rt kurang daripada satu," katanya menerusi ciapan di Twitter semalam.

Nilai Rt yang tertinggi ketika ini dilaporkan di Perlis iaitu 1.49 diikuti Sabah 1.41 dan Putrajaya (1.29) dan Kedah (1.22).

Selangor pula merekodkan nilai Rt iaitu 1.19, Pulau Pinang (1.17), Johor (1.16), Kelantan (1.08), Melaka (1.11), Kuala Lumpur (1.12), Negeri Sembilan (1.10), Pahang (1.14), Perak (1.10), Terengganu (1.13) dan Sarawak (1.17).

Selain itu, kes harian Covid-19 di negara ini dilaporkan meningkat kepada lima angka apabila mencatatkan sebanyak 10,069 kes semalam menjadikan jumlah

keseluruhan sebanyak 2,914,220 yang dijangkiti wabak tersebut.

Selangor mencatatkan angka tertinggi iaitu sebanyak 2,549 kes diikuti Johor (1,582 kes) dan Sabah (1,285 kes).

Sementara itu, Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar memaklumkan, Malaysia kini sudah sepenuhnya berdepan dengan gelombang varian Omicron.

"Masih ada sejuta warga emas yang tiada dos penggalak. Tolong maklum kepada orang tua kesayangan anda untuk mendapat dos penggalak dengan segera.

"Dengan dos penggalak, perlindungan anda daripada gejala serius yang boleh menyebabkan kemasukan ke hospital atau unit rawatan rapi lebih baik," katanya menerusi Twitter semalam.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT

Kes baharu Covid-19 lebih 10,000

Kali terakhir Malaysia merekodkan kes melebihi paras 10,000 adalah pada 2 Oktober lepas

KUALA LUMPUR

Kes baharu Covid-19 dalam negara hari ini melebihi 10,000 dengan 10,089 kes dilaporkan setakat 12 tengah hari, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes Covid-19 meningkat kepada 2,914,220, kata Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham.

Daripada 10,089 kes harian yang dilaporkan:

- 77 kes (0.76 peratus) adalah kategori 3, 4, dan 5 dan
- 10,012 kes (99.24 peratus) lagi adalah terdiri daripada kategori 1 dan 2.
- Kategori 1: 2,482 kes (24.6%)
- Kategori 2: 7,530 kes (74.64%)
- Kategori 3: 52 kes (0.51%)
- Kategori 4: 17 kes (0.17%)
- Kategori 5: 8 kes (0.08%)

Kali terakhir Malaysia merekodkan kes baharu Covid-19 melebihi paras 10,000 adalah pada 2 Oktober lepas iaitu 10,915 kes.

Dr Noor Hisham menerusi Twitter rasmi beliau berkata 99.24 peratus atau 10,012 kes baharu adalah dalam kategori satu dan dua, manakala 77 kes lagi atau 0.76 peratus berada dalam kategori tiga, empat serta lima.

Beliau berkata, Selangor merekodkan jumlah tertinggi kes positif iaitu 2,549 kes, diikuti Johor (1,582), Sabah (1,285), Kedah (904) dan Pahang (624).

Ita diikuti Pulau Pinang (542), Kuala Lumpur (491), Kelantan (471), Negeri Sembilan (464), Melaka (457), Perak (321), Terengganu (213), Putrajaya (61), Sarawak (58), Perlis (44) dan Labuan (23).

Mengenai kadar kebolehanjkitan (Rt) negara, Dr Noor Hisham berkata ia berada pada paras 1.2 dengan Perlis merekodkan nilai tertinggi iaitu 1.49 diikuti Sabah (1.41), Putrajaya (1.29), Kedah (1.22) manakala Pulau Pinang dan Sarawak merekodkan 1.17, setakat Sabtu.



NOOR HISHAM

Beliau berkata dengan Ro/Rt 1.2 ketika ini, Malaysia dijangka mencapai 22,000 kes Covid-19 menjelang akhir Mac ini, justeru menjadi tanggungjawab semua orang untuk mematuhi garis panduan kesihatan awam dan sosial.

Ujarnya, meningkatkan liputan vaksinasi dan suntikan dos penggalak juga boleh mengurangkan penularan serta menurunkan Ro/Rt kepada kurang daripada 1.

"Kita masih berdepan cabaran. Tanggungjawab kini ada pada kita untuk bersama-sama menghadapi lonjakan kes namun yang lebih penting kita perlu menjangkakan jumlah kes lebih tinggi dengan tahap keterukan yang rendah, kurang kemasukan ke hospital dan kurang kematian," katanya.

Setakat Sabtu, seramai 12,307,360 individu atau 52.6 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di negara ini telah menerima dos penggalak Covid-19. Sementara itu, seramai 22,929,020 individu atau 97.9 peratus dewasa telah melengkapkan vaksinasi mereka. *Bernama*

Kes harian dijangka cecah 15,000

KUALA LUMPUR - Malaysia kini sudah sepenuhnya berdepan dengan gelombang varian Omicron, kata Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar.

Menerusi satu hantaran di Twitter rasminya, beliau berkata kes harian Covid-19 dijangka akan mencecah 15,000 tidak lama lagi.



KHAIRY JAMALUDDIN

"Masih satu juta warga emas di negara belum menerima dos penggalak (vaksin Covid-19). Tolong maklum kepada orang-orang tua kesayangan anda untuk mendapat dos penggalak dengan segera," menurut hantaran itu pada Ahad.

Beliau berkata demikian sebagai maklum balas perkongsian Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah di akaun Twitternya mengenai imej Berisiko-Terdedah-Berjangkit-Diasingkan (SEIR) kes harian Covid-19 dan unjuran kes dari 31 Ogos 2021 hingga 31 Mac ini.

Sementara itu, dalam hantaran berasingan, Khairy turut menyeru orang ramai untuk mengambil dos penggalak dan menekankan tujuan utama vaksin Covid-19 adalah bagi mengurangkan keseriusan gejala.

"Dengan dos penggalak perlindungan anda daripada gejala serius yang boleh menyebabkan kemasukan ke hospital/ICU (unit rawatan rapi) lebih baik. Dapatkan suntikan dos penggalak," katanya. *Bernama*

Omicron dominan di Sarawak

KUCHING - Omicron kini menggantikan Delta sebagai varian yang dominan dalam penularan Covid-19 di Sarawak.

Perkara itu didedahkan oleh Pengarah Institut Kemahiran dan Perubatan Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Dr David Perera dalam laporan terbaharunya kepada Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Negeri, Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas pada Ahad.

Beliau berkata, kadar pengesanan kes positif varian Omicron daripada data pemerhatian yang dilakukan dari 3 hingga 26 Januari tahun ini telah didapati mencapai 78 peratus.

"Sebanyak 58 sampel telah diproses sepanjang tempoh itu dan daripada jumlah tersebut, 45 varian Omicron dan 13 varian Delta dikesan.

"Pengesanan pada kadar 78 peratus mencadangkan bahawa Omicron telah menggantikan Delta sebagai varian yang dominan di Sarawak," katanya sambil menambah kes Omicron terbabit telah dikesan daripada sampel yang diambil dari Kuching, Samarahan, Sibu, Kapit, Mukah dan Miri.

Dr David berkata majoriti sampel yang dikaji adalah daripada BA.1.1 namun tiga kes terdiri daripada BA.2 yang lebih mudah berjangkit telah dikesan di Kapit dan kebanyakannya berlaku menerusi penularan komuniti.

Susulan peningkatan kes dalam negara, ahli Kumpulan Penasihat Vaksin Covid-19 Sarawak itu turut menasihati individu yang belum mendapatkan dos penggalak agar segera berbuat demikian.

Beliau berkata, kajian menunjukkan bahawa suntikan dos penggalak diperlukan bagi meningkatkan tahap peneutralan antibodi yang menurun bagi melindungi diri daripada jangkitan Omicron. *Bernama*

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT

Kenduri lonjak kes Covid-19 di Kelantan

Berkumpul beramai-ramai abai SOP antara sebab pertambahan kes positif

Oleh HAZEL LANA KAMARUDIN

KOTA BHARU

Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Kelantan (JKNK) mendedahkan kenduri dan pergerakan keluar masuk sepanjang cuti umum sempena Tahun Baharu Cina menyumbang kepada lonjakan kes positif Covid-19 di negeri ini.

Pengarah JKNK, Datuk Dr Zaini Husin berkata, aktiviti berkumpul se-

cara beramai-ramai tanpa mengikut prosedur operasi standard (SOP) turut menjadi punca jumlah pertambahan kes positif.

"Bagaimanapun majoriti kes tersebut melibatkan kategori satu dan dua sahaja," katanya ketika dihubungi *Sinar Harian* pada Ahad.

Menurutnya, kes-kes pesakit tersebut sedang menjalani kuarantin di Pusat Kuarantin dan Rawatan Covid-19 (PKRC) atau rumah masing-masing.

Beliau berkata, melihat kepada pertambahan kes itu, PKRC di negeri ini masih mampu menampung pesakit.



DR ZAINI

Dr Zaini berkata, JKNK kini berada dalam keadaan siap sedia untuk mengaktifkan lebih banyak PKRC sekiranya diperlukan untuk berbunt demikian.

"Nasihat saya kekal patuh kepada SOP supaya rantaian Covid-19 dapat diputuskan dengan sebaik mungkin.

"Terus memakai pelitup muka, menjaga penjarakan fizikal dan sebagainya seperti arahan kerajaan," katanya.

Pada Sabtu, sebanyak 637 kes positif Covid-19 telah direkodkan di negeri ini.

Pertambahan itu menyaksikan Kelantan mencapai 75 peratus peningkatan kes dalam tempoh 14 hari.

Kerajaan perlu beri penjelasan isu Covid-19

GEORGETOWN - Kerajaan perlu memberi penjelasan secara terbuka kepada rakyat berhubung pendekatan diambil dalam menangani wabak Covid-19 yang melanda negara sejak dua tahun lalu.

Ahli Parlimen Gua Musang, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah berkata, selain krisis kesihatan, negara juga berhadapan dengan banyak krisis susulan penularan wabak tersebut.

Beliau berkata, negara sudah membelanjakan RM5 bilion untuk menangani Covid-19 termasuk pembelian vaksin dan sebagainya.

"Saya bimbang dan khuatir dengan keadaan negara kita sekarang ini kerana menghadapi banyak krisis antaranya krisis kepimpinan, kesihatan, kewangan dan sebagainya.

"Dari segi kesihatan, isu Covid-19 belum selesai sedangkan kita sudah berbelanja banyak untuk membeli vaksin.

"Walaupun wang keluar sudah banyak, namun jumlah yang dijangkiti masih lagi meningkat contohnya seperti semalam (Sabtu)," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian ketika ditemui selepas menghadiri Forum Perpaduan 2022 di Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) pada Ahad.

Dalam pada itu, beliau berkata, kerajaan perlu telus dalam memberi penjelasan berhubung perkara tersebut kerana rakyat masih tertanya-tanya mengenainya.

"Pada Sabtu, kes mencecah 9,000 lebih, itu bukan (angka) yang sedikit.

Sampai bila kita nak belanja sedangkan di sesetengah negara yang kita tahu, sudah melonggarkan segala peraturan yang ketat namun Malaysia masih sama.

"Mengapa begitu? Kita sudah ada dos penggalak tetapi (kes) tak reda-reda juga. Jadi banyak persoalan di minda rakyat kerana keadaan semakin melampau. Nak potong rambut pun tak boleh jika tak divaksin, semuanya menjadi susah.

"Ini bukan soal antivaksin tetapi sudah divaksin pun masih dijangkiti juga. Jadi yang mana satu betul, ini yang rakyat persoalkan. Sehingga ke hari ini, kerajaan belum beri penjelasan secara terbuka dan ikhlas kepada mereka yang menyyoal tindakan-tindakan kerajaan ini," ujarnya.

Vaksinasi kanak-kanak di Pulau Pinang bermula hari ini

GEORGETOWN-

Proses vaksinasi bagi kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun di Pulau Pinang akan bermula pada Isnin di dua pusat pemberian vaksin (PPV) yang disediakan.

Exco Agroteknologi dan Keselamatan Makanan, Pembangunan Luar Bandar serta Kesihatan, Dr Norlela Ariffin berkata, vaksinasi itu untuk mereka yang mempunyai komorbid atau tergolong dalam kalangan yang berisiko tinggi.

Katanya, pemberian vaksin menerusi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kanak-kanak (PICKids) itu merupakan yang pertama melibatkan kanak-kanak di negeri ini.

"Vaksinasi untuk kanak-kanak berusia lingkungan lima hingga 11 tahun di Pulau Pinang akan bermula esok. Ia hanya untuk mereka yang mempunyai beberapa penyakit (komorbid) atau berisiko tinggi.

"Dua buah PPV sahaja dibuka untuk proses vaksinasi bagi golongan ini iaitu di Hospital Pulau Pinang (HPP) dan Hospital Seberang Jaya (HSJ). Hospital-hospital lain tidak terlibat," katanya ketika dihubungi pada Ahad.

Tambahnya, untuk kanak-kanak yang tiada penyakit, mereka akan disuntik sama ada di Klinik Kesihatan atau di sekolah.

"Sementara itu, populasi kanak-kanak dalam kalangan usia berkenaan di negeri ini adalah berjumlah 160,000 orang," katanya.

Sementara itu, Norlela berkata, dua lagi kluster pendidikan dilaporkan di Pulau Pinang sehingga Sabtu menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan 12 kluster aktif ketika ini.

"Dua kluster baharu itu adalah Bandar Putra Bertam iaitu Madrasah Al-Aminiah Bertam Tahfiz Vokasional di Seberang Perai Utara dan kluster Jalan Bukit Minyak Dua iaitu Kolej Vokasional Seberang Perai di Seberang Perai Tengah.

"Mengenai taburan kes Covid-19 melibatkan pendidikan, sebanyak 60 buah sekolah rendah dan menengah dengan 12 kluster direkodkan setakat ini," katanya.



NORLELA

Tiada kluster pendidikan di Perak

BATU GAJAH - Perak masih belum mengesan sebarang penularan wabak Covid-19 melibatkan kluster pendidikan.

Exco Pendidikan, Pengajian Tinggi dan Sumber Manusia Perak, Ahmad Saidi Mohamad Daud berkata, biarpun terdapat kes positif melibatkan pelajar tetapi ia berlaku di luar sekolah.

Katanya, keadaan itu berlaku disebabkan semua institusi pendidikan di negeri ini khususnya sekolah harian amat menitikberatkan prosedur operasi standard (SOP) pelajar ke sekolah bagi membendung virus tersebut.

"Daripada laporan yang diterima melalui Kementerian Pendidikan bagi

sekolah-sekolah di Perak, buat masa ini tiada laporan berkaitan kluster.

"Bagi pelajar sekolah harian pula, kita berterima kasih kepada semua warga pendidik, cikgu-cikgu yang memainkan peranan sangat penting dan efektif dengan mengambil langkah sepatutnya dengan menegakkan prosedur SOP ke sekolah sama ada pada awal pagi atau sesi petang," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian kepada pemberita selepas menghadiri program Rewang Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung (GPMS) Perak di Institut GPMS Perak pada Ahad.

Hadir sama, Presiden GPMS, Mohd Alif Anas Md Noor; Presiden Majlis

Belia Negeri Perak, Muhammad Puhaz Saleh dan Pengerusi GPMS Perak, Mohamad Faizal Haramaini.

Ahmad Saidi berkata, setiap pelajar akan dipastikan benar-benar sihat sebelum memasuki kelas dan jika terdapat sebarang simptom, pihak sekolah akan memanggil ibu bapa atau penjaga untuk membawa pulang anak mereka bagi pemeriksaan lanjut.

Dalam laporan media pada 31 Januari lalu, kluster pendidikan terus mendominasi penularan Covid-19 di negara ini melibatkan negeri Melaka, Kedah dan Negeri Sembilan.



Ahmad Saidi (tengah) menerima cenderahati daripada Mohamad Faizal ketika hadir ke program Rewang GPMS Perak di Institut GPMS Perak, pada Ahad.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 17
RUANGAN : CETUSAN

Biarlah WHO yang isytihar endemik



DR MUZAFFAR SYAH MALLOW

PERSPEKTIF

Adalah lebih baik sekiranya kita membenarkan Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) melakukan proses pengisytiharan penukaran status Covid-19 daripada pandemik pada ketika ini kepada endemik. Sekiranya kita membenarkan kerajaan dari sesebuah negara melakukan proses penukaran status Covid-19 berkenaan, dibimbangi boleh menyebabkan dunia menjadi kelam kabut, sekali gus mengundang kekeliruan dalam kalangan orang ramai.

Sejak kebelakangan ini terdapat beberapa buah kerajaan dunia termasuk Malaysia yang ingin melaksanakan proses penukaran status Covid-19 daripada pandemik kepada endemik. Endemik merujuk kepada wabak atau penyakit yang sentiasa wujud di sesuatu kawasan atau daerah tertentu. Ini termasuk penularan wabak atau penyakit dalam skop lebih besar seperti melibatkan sebuah negara. Penyakit malaria yang menyerang kawasan-kawasan di benua

Afrika, satu ketika dulu adalah antara endemik yang mengancam dunia.

Istilah pandemik pula merujuk kepada wabak atau penyakit yang menyerang dalam skop lebih besar dan tidak terhad kepada sesuatu komuniti atau daerah semata-mata. Wabak atau penyakit ini akan mengancam kawasan lebih luas seperti sebuah negeri, negara, benua atau mungkin seluruh dunia jika dibiarkan melarat.

Dengan mengisytiharkan sesuatu jenis wabak atau penyakit sebagai endemik, sesebuah kerajaan tidak perlu lagi mengambil langkah-langkah besar bagi mengawal penularan wabak dan penyakit terbahit seperti yang dilakukan dalam situasi pandemik seperti kawalan pergerakan, pelaksanaan kerja dari rumah, proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran secara dalam talian, tidak memberi kebebasan sepenuhnya kepada orang ramai untuk melakukan rentas negara dan lain-lain.

Setelah sesuatu wabak atau penyakit telah ditukar statusnya kepada endemik, pihak kerajaan dilihat seolah-olah telah mengaku kalah dalam usahanya untuk mengawal penularan sesuatu jenis wabak dalam negara mereka. Pihak kerajaan akan meminta rakyat mereka untuk hidup bersama wabak atau penyakit ini untuk selama-lamanya dan akan hanya

akan meminta rakyat untuk menjaga diri mereka sendiri dan mendapatkan bantuan perubatan sendiri sekiranya mereka dijangkiti dengan wabak berkenaan.

Sekiranya kerajaan sesebuah negara mengambil langkah sendiri dengan menukar status penularan virus Covid-19 ini sebagai endemik, dibimbangi ia boleh menggugat hubungan negara mereka dengan negara lain yang tidak mengambil langkah sama. Bayangkan sekiranya Malaysia isytihar Covid-19 sebagai endemik, sementara banyak negara dalam dunia masih isytihar Covid-19 sebagai pandemik, bagaimana negara terbahit hendak membenarkan rakyat kita bergerak ke negara mereka kelak? Kerajaan di negara lain juga mungkin akan mengenakan pelbagai larangan untuk membenarkan rakyat negara mereka untuk datang ke negara kita atau mana-mana negara yang telah menukar status Covid-19 sebagai endemik secara sendirian.

Penukaran status Covid-19 sebagai endemik secara sendirian ini juga mungkin akan menyebabkan kekeliruan berlaku dalam kalangan orang ramai khususnya terhadap tahap jangkitan dan bahaya virus Covid-19 berkenaan di mana jumlah jangkitan dan kematian akibat Covid-19 masih dilaporkan berlaku dalam negara kita dan di serata

dunia. Ini ditambah lagi dengan kemunculan pelbagai jenis mutasi daripada Covid-19 yang lebih mudah menjangkiti orang lain.

Cara terbaik untuk menilai semula status Covid-19 adalah dengan membenarkan WHO untuk melakukan proses penukaran status Covid-19 ini. Sebagai sebuah agensi kesihatan antarabangsa yang paling lama berfungsi dan utama dalam dunia, sebarang keputusan yang diambil WHO akan lebih didengari dan dihormati oleh semua pihak.

Walaupun setiap kerajaan dan negara ingin mengambil langkah segera membuka semula sempadan negara mereka dan menguatkan semula sektor ekonomi, ia tidak harus dilakukan secara tergesa-gesa sehingga boleh menjejaskan keselamatan semua pihak.

Sebarang keputusan menukar status wabak atau penyakit yang sedang menular harus dilakukan dan dirancang dengan baik, berhati-hati dan melalui kerjasama dengan semua negara supaya tidak timbul pula penyakit baharu yang lebih berbahaya dan di luar kawalan pada masa akan datang.

** Dr Muzaffar Syah Mallow ialah Profesor Madya di Fakulti Syariah dan Undang-Undang, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)*

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

Angka jangkitan Covid-19 melepasi 10,000 kes semalam

Boleh cecah 22,000 akhir Mac

Oleh SITI A'ISYAH SUKAIMI
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PUTRAJAYA: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menjangkakan bilangan jangkitan Covid-19 boleh mencecah sehingga 22,000 kes menjelang akhir Mac tahun ini.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, pada masa ini nilai kebolehjangkitan Rt negara mencatatkan 1.20, semalam.

"Oleh itu menjadi tanggungjawab kita mematuhi semua langkah kesihatan dan sosial serta meningkatkan liputan vaksinasi serta dos penggalak untuk mengurangkan jangkitan dan menurunkan nilai Rt kurang daripada satu," katanya pada ciapan akaun Twitter beliau di sini, semalam.

Di Selangor, nilai Rt mencecah 1.19, Sabah (1.41), Pulau Pinang (1.17), Johor (1.16), Kelantan (1.08), Melaka (1.11), Kuala Lumpur (1.12), Putrajaya (1.29), Negeri Sembilan (1.10) dan Kedah (1.22).

Sementara Pahang mencatat 1.14, Perak (1.10), Terengganu (1.13), Sarawak (1.17), Perlis (1.49) dan Labuan (15 kes).

Dalam pada itu, Dr. Noor



ORANG ramai berkumpul menyaksikan Festival Perlumbaan Perahu Naga 2022 di Dataran Pengkalan Sungai Kampung Tanjung Sabtu, Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, semalam. - UTUSAN/PUQTRA HAIRRY

Hisham sekali lagi mengingatkan bahawa negara belum bebas daripada penularan Covid-19.

"Yang penting pada kita perlu menjangkakan jumlah kes yang tinggi ini, namun keterukan yang kurang selain kurangnya

kemasukan ke hospital dan kurangnya kematian," katanya.

Berdasarkan laporan kes jangkitan harian Covid-19, semalam, negara melepasi angka 10,000 dengan 10,089 kes iaitu meningkat berbanding se-

malam dengan rekod 9,117 kes.

Daripada jumlah kes yang dilaporkan semalam, sebanyak 77 kes atau 0.76 peratus kategori tiga, empat dan lima manakala, 10,012 kes atau 99.24 peratus kategori satu dan dua.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : NEWS / STORY OF THE DAY

Surviving the surge

It isn't over until it's over

SO the surge is finally here. A high of 7,234 cases on Friday and an even higher 9,117 on Saturday. We should have known. Countries around the region and elsewhere, even those with high vaccination rates, have been registering worrying hospitalisation and death rates for some time now. And in festival-ridden Malaysia, we are just a mass movement of people old. There will be another soon when the Johor election takes place. It is no secret that a mass of people is a mass of potential hosts. Did some of us throw caution to the wind? Perhaps. Numbers just don't go up on their own. An expert or two among us talk of a balance of risks and rewards. In theory, a perfect balance is possible. But we do not live in a theoretical world. The practical world is one which is known more for its breach than observance of rules. And so it happened here on Friday and Saturday. But that much is water under the bridge. Our eyes must be fixed on the future. The best the past can do is to stop us from repeating mistakes.

One such mistake is to treat Covid-19 as an endemic disease like the flu. When it isn't yet. Spain appears to be taking this route, even though the end to the pandemic is not in sight there. Barcelona Institute for Global Health's Jefferey Lazarus tells the Euronews portal of a possible reason: "I think this is more about politics than public health." Better to pay heed to the World Health Organisation (WHO), which is of the view

Better to pay heed to the World Health Organisation (WHO), which is of the view that it would be too premature to go down the endemic road.

that it would be premature to go down the endemic road. Let's not forget that there are still many unfortunate people around the globe who still remain unvaccinated despite Covid-19 being around for more than two years. Blame it on the rich countries which prefer to hoard rather than help. Apartheid may have begun as a political idea, but today it is a cause of global public health disaster as well. Besides, the debate as to what is and is not endemic isn't settled as yet. WHO's executive director for health emergencies Mike Ryan put it to Bloomberg thus: "Endemic itself does not mean good. Endemic means it is here forever." And that's how we should treat Covid-19, the Omicron variant or otherwise, as such. An ever-present disease. As Bloomberg points out, tuberculosis and malaria are endemic in some parts of the world, with the former claiming 1.5 million lives and the latter 650,000 lives in 2020. This can't be good news. It simply means a new normal of face masks, sanitisers and social distancing. Anything less would make us part of the statistics. The wise wouldn't let their days be so numbered.

Sure, we can't be a China and adopt a zero-Covid strategy with lockdowns for even a few infections. It would be a paranoia of a different order. We just don't have the socioeconomic buffer to withstand such a measure. Neither must we be lockdown-free Britain where face coverings and social distancing are as unmentionable as "partygate". British Prime Minister Boris Johnson may think Covid-19 to be not as critical a threat to Britain as the political crisis there is to his future. But that is a Leader for another time. For now, the answer for Malaysia must lie somewhere in between.

NEW STRAITS TIMES

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A man getting a Covid-19 booster shot in Seberang Jaya on Jan 30. PIX BY DANIAL SAAD

10,089 CASES YESTERDAY

22,000 INFECTIONS IN ONE DAY PROJECTED

Dr Noor Hisham says this could happen by the end of March

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THE number of new Covid-19 cases soared past the 10,000 mark yesterday, with health authorities warning it could exceed 22,000 in a single day next month.

Data showed that the use of hospital and intensive care unit (ICU) beds for Covid-19 patients is on the rise.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said Malaysia recorded 10,089 new cases yesterday, bringing the cumulative infections since the pandemic began to 2,914,220.

Selangor recorded the highest number of new infections with 2,549 cases, followed by Johor with 1,582 and Sabah with 1,285.

Dr Noor Hisham said the government was bracing for a spike in daily cases of up to 22,000 by the end of next month.

He said the projection was based on the current infectivity rate (Rt), which continued to rise

to 1.20 on Saturday.

"The onus is on us to comply with all public health and social measures plus increase vaccination and booster shot coverage to reduce the transmission and lower the Rt to less than one."

On Saturday, Perlis had the highest Rt at 1.49.

Meanwhile, data from the Health Ministry's CovidNow website showed that the national bed utilisation rate for Covid-19 patients increased to 63.4 per cent on Saturday from 61.8 per cent the day before.

Four states reported a bed utilisation rate of above 70 per cent, with the highest in Negri Sembilan at 75.4 per cent.

It was 74.9 per cent in Kedah, 75.1 per cent in Melaka and 71.1 per cent in Johor.

The national average for intensive care unit utilisation for



Several vials of Covid-19 vaccines at a vaccination centre in Ang St Chong Hall in Butterworth on Thursday.

Covid-19 cases increased to 52 per cent on Saturday from 51 per cent the day before.

Only Kuala Lumpur and Johor were above the 70 per cent mark at 76.9 and 72.3 per cent, respectively.

The number of active cases also increased to 65,952 on Saturday. There are 57,895 people observing home quarantine, making up 87.8 per cent of the active cases.

A total of 6.4 per cent (or 4,205) patients are being treated at Covid-19 quarantine and treatment centres, 5.7 per cent (3,729 people) are hospitalised. The remaining 0.2 per cent are in intensive care units.

Page 1 pic: People with face masks crossing a road during the Chinese New Year holiday in Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur, on Thursday.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : STORY OF THE DAY / NEWS

78pc DETECTION RATE

OMICRON NOW DOMINATES IN SARAWAK, SAYS EXPERT

Most cases are of BA.1.1 lineage and involve community transmission

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THERE is growing concern in Sabah and Sarawak over the increasing number of Covid-19 infections.

Statistics showed that Omicron is now the dominant variant in Sarawak. In Sabah, which has seen a rapid rise in new cases, experts are calling for greater protection of high-risk groups.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Institute of Health and Community Medicine director Professor Dr David Perera said Omicron has replaced Delta as the dominant variant in Sarawak.

He said the Omicron detection rate of 78 per cent was derived from surveillance data of positive cases from Jan 3 to 26.

"Fifty-eight samples were sequenced over the period.

"Forty-five cases were linked to Omicron and 13 Delta cases were detected.

"The 78 per cent detection rate suggests that Omicron has replaced Delta as the dominant circulating variant in Sarawak," he said in a report to the Sarawak Disaster Management Committee chairman Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas yesterday.

Dr Perera added that the Omicron cases were detected in samples taken from Kuching, Samarahan, Sibuan, Kapit, Mukah and Miri.

He said most were of the BA.1.1 lineage, but three cases of the more infectious BA.2 were identified in Kapit.

"Most of these cases were through community transmissions," he said.

In light of the increasing number of Covid-19 cases, Dr Perera, who is a member of the Sarawak Covid-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, advised those who have yet to get their booster dose to do so immediately.

Studies, he said, have shown this was necessary to boost waning neutralising antibody levels to protect from Omicron.

He reminded the people to continue to strictly observe the standard operating procedures and avoid community gatherings to prevent the further spread of the virus.

The Institute of Health and Community Medicine from Unim is responsible for tracking



A Covid-19 patient waiting to be transferred at the Sandakan Sports Complex's quarantine and treatment centre yesterday. (Inset) Professor Dr David Perera. BERNAMA PIC

the SARS-CoV-2 variants circulating in the state.

In Kota Kinabalu, infectious diseases expert Dr Timothy William said priority should be given to high-risk groups as the Covid-19 situation in Sabah was worsening.

He said with the spike in cases from three to four digits within three days, it was inevitable that the number would continue to rise over the next few weeks.

"It is likely most cases will be from Omicron, which has a high Rt but seems to be less virulent. Most people who have been fully vaccinated will get a mild infection.

"However, those who have not been vaccinated are at risk of getting severe symptoms," he told the *New Straits Times*, adding that high-risk subjects include those above 60 years old and in-

dividuals with comorbidities.

Dr William urged those in the high-risk groups to get the booster shot as soon as possible.

He said the same preventive measures of vaccination and booster shot should also be applied to the younger generation as almost half of Covid-19 cases involved those between 18 and 39 years old.

Education clusters, 17 of which are still active, have accounted for a significant number of cases since the reopening of schools last month.

"It is inevitable there will be clusters in schools. (However), young people and children have a very low risk of developing severe Covid-19 symptoms.

"The risk of developing severe infections in children and in young people can be further reduced if they receive the vac-

cine. If their parents are worried, they should ensure that their children get vaccinated," he added.

Dr William said it was difficult to predict the Rt and cautioned that it was not pragmatic to focus on daily cases.

"However, it is crucial to monitor the number of people who need to be admitted and those who die."

Up to Saturday, Sabah has recorded 2,837 deaths with 1,110 being brought-in-dead cases.

Yesterday, the state's hospital bed utilisation rate stood at 64.5 per cent.

Dr William also said movement restrictions and lockdowns of any kind have not shown to be effective.

"Personal protection and responsibility are still the best ways to protect yourself."

Khairy: Malaysia fully into Omicron wave

KUALA LUMPUR: Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin yesterday stressed the importance of obtaining the Covid-19 booster shot to fight the Omicron wave.

Saying that Malaysia was "fully into the Omicron wave", he cautioned that the number of new Covid-19 infections, which exceeded 10,000 yesterday, could soon rise to 15,000.

He said a significant number of senior citizens had yet to get their

booster shot.

"There are one million senior citizens who have yet to obtain their booster doses.

"Please inform your elders to get them quickly," he said on Twitter.

In a separate posting, Khairy pleaded with the public to seek their booster dose if they hadn't already done so, adding that the main reason of getting the vaccine was to reduce the sever-

ity of infection.

"Booster shots help prevent serious symptoms, which could lead to hospitalisation and intensive care unit (ICU) treatment," he said.

Data from the ministry's Covid-Now portal suggested a wider booster coverage could lead to a reduction in hospitalisation rates.

On Saturday, the data showed that 91.8 per cent of adults in

Sarawak had received both vaccine doses, and 71 per cent had taken the booster shot.

This has led to only 64 daily hospital admissions due to Covid-19, with a bed utilisation rate of just 13.7 per cent.

There are also only four cases in the state's ICUs.

Cases in Sarawak hospitals have shown a downward trend since October last year. The number of those requiring ICU treat-

ment has been dropping since mid-December.

Sarawak also recorded a relatively low number of daily cases, with only 58 yesterday.

There are only 162 active cases in the state.

Forty-three people in Sarawak are observing home quarantine, and 21 are at quarantine and treatment centres.

Ninety-four people in the state are hospitalised.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS / NATION

PICKIDS

SABAH SURGEON'S KID GETS JAB

Dr Leong confident vaccine can protect his daughter, 11, from Covid-19

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WHEN it was announced that the Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) would start in Sabah, vascular surgeon Dr Benjamin Leong wasted no time in signing up his daughter, Carmen, 11.

Dr Leong was among the first people to register their children for the programme. On Friday, his daughter got her jab at Putatan Health Clinic.

"I am confident my daughter is protected. There is evidence that vaccination protects children from Covid-19 infection, and also from developing serious effects if infected."

"Besides, with the Health Ministry approving and encouraging children from 5 to 11 to be vaccinated, this removed any doubt that the vaccination will cause more harm than good to my daughter," he said.

He said apart from a mild pain on the injection site, his daughter did not experience fever or lethargy.



Vascular surgeon Dr Benjamin Leong taking his daughter for her Covid-19 vaccination at Putatan Health Clinic in Kota Kinabalu on Friday. PIC COURTESY OF DR BENJAMIN LEONG

Sabah Health director Datuk Dr Rose Nani Mudin said PICKids kicked off on Thursday at five specialist hospitals: Sabah Women and Children's Hospital near here, Duchess of Kent Hospital in Sandakan, and in Keningau, Lahad Datu and Tawau hospitals.

Up to Feb 3, 23,578 children between 5 and 11 in Sabah had registered in the MySejahtera application for their vaccination.

The expansion of the vaccination programme for children throughout the state was increased from Saturday.

The second dose of the vaccine, which was at 10 mcg or one-third of the dose for adults, would be given after eight weeks.

Sabah on Saturday recorded 1,205 Covid-19 cases, with 112 cases involving children aged between 5 and 11.

Penang kicks off PICKids today

GEORGE TOWN: The Covid-19 Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) begins in Penang today.

State Health Committee chairman Dr Norlela Ariffin said initially, PICKids would be implemented at Penang Hospital and Seberang Jaya Hospital for children with comorbidities and those in the high-risk group.

She said there were about 160,000 children aged between 5 and 11 in the state.

"The others will receive their vaccination in health clinics or schools."

Norlela said two more education clusters were reported, bringing the total number of education clusters to 12 up to yesterday.

The two are the Bandar Putra Bertam cluster involving the Madrasah Al-Aminiah Bertam Tahfiz Vokasional in the Seberang Prai Utara district and the Jalan Bukit Minyak Dua cluster involving Kolej Vokasional Seberang Prai in the Seberang Prai



A mother comforting her children after they were given their Covid-19 vaccine in Putrajaya yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

Tengah district.

In Kota Baru, state Health director Datuk Dr Zaini Hussin said PICKids would roll out in the state next week after the registration process was completed.

"We are still distributing forms to get parents' consent (for their children's inoculation)."

"The forms have been distributed to schoolchildren.

"Once the process ends, we will start PICKids."

The appointment-based PICKids began in the Klang Valley on Thursday.

The children were administered with the paediatric dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Cominaty vaccine.

The Health Ministry had targeted 70 per cent of school-going

children, aged between 7 to 11, to receive their first dose within two months, and for 50 per cent of the overall 3.6 million children (including those aged 5 and 6) to receive their first vaccine dose by the end of this month.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the government would not impose restrictions on children who were unvaccinated.

Radzi's son among those vaccinated

KUALA LUMPUR: Senior Education Minister Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin was among those who brought their children to receive the Covid-19 vaccine yesterday.

In a Facebook posting, he said he took his youngest son to the IOI Mall vaccination centre and the process proceeded smoothly.

He said it took only less than an hour from queuing up until the vaccination and observation.

"Congratulations KKM (Health Ministry) and YB KJ (Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin)."

"For parents who have children aged 5 to 11, let's register them for vaccination #PICKids," he said.

The Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) was recently launched to protect children from Covid-19.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
 MUKA SURAT : 5
 RUANGAN : NATION / NEWS

NEW SCHOOL YEAR STARTS MARCH 21

'CONDUCT VIRTUAL CLASSES TILL MARCH'

Kota Kinabalu MP urges govt to speed up vaccination for pupils ahead of new school year

OLIVIA MIWIL
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AFEDERAL lawmaker is urging that the remaining three weeks of school be held online.

Kota Kinabalu member of parliament Chan Foong Hin said as the new school year would only kick off on March 21, as fixed by the Education Ministry, there was no need for the children to rush back to school now.

"Even if the schoolchildren were to attend classes now, they would only be reviewing last year's syllabus and not learn anything new.

"Please do not make any pri-

mary school pupil who has not been vaccinated to attend physical classes now. It is a very dangerous time.

"Is it worth the risk to require primary school pupils (aged 5 to 11) who have not been vaccinated to attend physical classes now?"

Apart from the 17 education clusters, Chan said, the relaxation of the standard operating procedures for the Chinese New Year had seen more social activities, which extended the chain of transmission of Covid-19.

New Covid-19 cases in Sabah yesterday spiked to 1,285 with 1,276 cases in Category 1 and 2.

Chan said in the next three weeks the Health Ministry must step up vaccination for schoolchildren across the country so that the new school year would not be disturbed and

threatened by new Covid-19 waves.

"Hopefully, by the start of the new school year in March with most of the students fully inoculated with the Covid-19 vaccine, they can safely attend classes."



Chan Foong Hin

In Sabah, the Health Department launched the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) at 251 vaccination facilities on Saturday to vaccinate children aged 5 to 11 against Covid-19.

Chan said the Health and Education Ministries must work hand-in-hand to step up vaccination of schoolchildren.

"With the vaccination of schoolchildren, schools would no longer be required to open and close frequently even with the increase in Covid-19 cases," he added.

**PELAKSANAAN
 PROGRAM
 IMUNISASI COVID-19
 KANAK-KANAK
 (PICKids)
 5 HINGGA
 BAWAH 12 TAHUN**



Children, accompanied by their parents, waiting to get the Covid-19 vaccine shot at Tunku Azizah Hospital in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday. PIC BY EIZAIRI SHAMSUDIN

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NATION

'Get ahead of virus surge'

Experts: Fine-tune mitigation strategies to cope with Omicron

By RAHIMY RAHIM
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PETALING JAYA: Health experts are calling on Malaysia to fine-tune its Covid-19 mitigation strategies to cope with the Omicron surge as the nation braces itself for the wave of cases, which is expected to last some weeks.

This comes as Malaysia recorded over 10,000 cases over the past 24 hours, something which it had not seen since October.

Epidemiologist Dr Sanjay Rampal warned that the peak of this new wave of Covid-19 cases would be felt in the coming two or three months.

He explained that the reason for this could be due to the community transmission of the Omicron strain and decreased health seeking behaviour following the floods at the end of last year.

"If the recent increase is due to the Omicron strain, I believe that could breach the 20,000 daily cases in four weeks," he said, when contacted yesterday.

The Health Ministry had also predicted that Malaysia's Covid-19 cases would continue to show an upwards trend in the coming weeks.

However, following the precedent in other countries like South Africa, Britain and the United States, where the strain had peaked and ebbed, the surge was likely to last weeks and not months.

For example, according to Our World in Data, the number of new cases recorded in Britain were over 847,371 on Jan 31 but this had fallen drastically to over 60,114 by Feb 5.

Similarly, new cases in South Africa peaked at 26,389 on Dec 15 but had fallen to 8,078 cases by Jan 4. On Feb 5, there were 6,135 cases.

Health authorities, said Rampal, could manage the coming Omicron wave by getting ready the country's public health services, testing facilities, and primary health care facilities to cope with the possible exponential increase in demand for prevention activities.

"A failure to plan for surge capacity at the district level will lead to our public health services being overwhelmed and higher levels of Covid-19 community transmission."

"Although the stress to our hospitals will be relatively lower in this new wave, I expect a very much higher demand for primary health care services," he added.



You are rawr-some: A person in a dinosaur costume checking in on children waiting their turn and receiving the Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in Kota Damansara. — AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

Immunologist Datuk Dr Musa Nordin said the Health Minister would need to take a proactive stance and sound the alarm call to counter the onslaught of Omicron by reactivating the Covid-19 National Task Force (NTF).

Originally known as the Greater Klang Valley Special Covid-19 Task Force (GKVSF), the NTF is made up of an inclusive, coordinated multi-agency or sectorial team with varying expertise in pandemic management.

"The GKVSF had successfully flattened the Delta curve when earlier efforts, including MCOs and Emergency Ordinances (EO), failed, causing critical case numbers to spike in July last year, resulting in a total collapse of health care services, and a catastrophic number of deaths," said Dr Musa.

He also noted that the entire workflow involving district hospitals, quarantine centres, government and private hospitals must be comprehensively addressed, with the implementation of an end-to-end automated outbreak management system.

"Omicron has also taken a toll on health care workers with many falling sick. It is important that our health care workers are all boosted with mRNA vaccines to ensure that

we are not short-staffed when Omicron really hits us.

"There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We have a working model (GKVSF) and modus operandi that successfully dealt with the Delta wave," he suggested.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia health economics, hospital and health management's Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh said if proper mitigation plans were not implemented by the relevant authorities, the numbers would continue to go up in the next few weeks.

"I would strongly urge the authorities to come up with a proper mitigation plan to address this."

"I am not saying that they should implement a full movement control order because of its adverse impact including to the economy. But they can implement measures, such as enhanced movement control orders, in certain high risk areas, and re-look at prevention plans to limit movement in public areas like offices and schools," she said.

"Those who are able to work from home can continue to do so or perhaps employers can consider implementing a hybrid working arrangement," she said.

Although Omicron cases were reportedly less severe, Dr Sharifa

Ezat urged everyone not to take the situation for granted due to the rapid transmission.

"It is true that we should not panic but if we don't do anything, the situation will worsen as fatalities are still being recorded," she said.

On whether the numbers would continue to climb, Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman believes this will largely depend on the public's commitment to adhere to all the standard operating procedures (SOP).

"I think the community should play a role as well and help our frontliners from being further overburdened by practising all the SOP," she said.

In other countries, including Denmark and Britain, governments have announced plans to lift all their domestic Covid-19 restrictions with Omicron not being categorised "as a severe disease for the vaccinated".

However, face coverings are still required in healthcare settings, including hospitals, and on public transport.

Covid passes are also not required for large events and at public venues, and people are no longer being advised to work from home.

Omicron now the dominant variant in Sarawak

KUCHING: The Omicron variant has now replaced the Delta variant as the dominant Covid-19 variant in Sarawak, says a public health expert.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Institute of Health and Community Medicine director Dr David Perera said in his latest report, the detection rate for Omicron from surveillance data of positive cases from Jan 3-26 was 78%.

According to Bernama, the report was given to Sarawak disaster management committee chairman Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas yesterday.

"The 78% detection rate suggests that Omicron has replaced Delta."

Dr David Perera

According to Dr Perera, 58 samples were successfully sequenced over this period and out of these, 45 were from the Omicron variant while 13 were from the Delta variant.

"The 78% detection rate suggests that Omicron has replaced Delta as the dominant circulating variant in Sarawak," he said, adding that the Omicron cases were detected in samples taken from Kuching, Samarahan, Sibau, Kapit, Mukah and Miri.

He said the majority were of the BA.1.1 lineage but three cases of the more infectious BA.2 were also identified in Kapit, with most of these occurring through community transmission.

Dr Perera, who is a member of the Sarawak Covid-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, urged those who had yet to get their booster dose to do so immediately.

Studies, he said, had shown that a booster shot was necessary to boost waning neutralising antibody levels to protect from Omicron infection.

Hajiji calls for strict SOP compliance as Sabah cases double

MUGUNTAN VANAR
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KOTA KINABALU: Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor has appealed to Sabahans to strictly follow the standard operating procedures (SOP) to curb Covid-19 after cases more than doubled to over 1,000 from around 500 in the past month.

Sabah has the lowest vaccination rates at only 76.2% of the total adult population being fully inoculated, according to CovidNow. In contrast, the country's total adult vaccination rate was at 97.9%.

"There is a need for everyone to strictly adhere to the SOP to avoid any further surge," he said after attending the Gabungan Rakyat Sabah backbenchers retreat in

northern Kudat yesterday.

In a tweet, Sabah Covid-19 spokesman Datuk Seri Masidi Manjun said the state recorded 1,285 cases yesterday after infection numbers dropped to below 500 over the past month.

"As predicted, new cases continue to shoot up and today, it's 1,285 - 80 more cases than yesterday's. High symptomatic sporadic cases (47.5%) fuelling faster community transmission; expect higher number ahead," he wrote.

He said out of the total cases, 1,276 or 99.3% were in Categories One and Two.

Five cases were reported in Category Three, three in Category Four and one in Category Five, added Masidi.

Meanwhile, Sabah DAP chairman Datuk Frankie Poon urged the state Education Department to defer the return of students to schools until the completion of the vaccination programme for children aged five to 11, which started on Feb 3.

"I urge the Education Ministry to defer the going back to school after all the schoolchildren have been fully vaccinated (for those who want it) or until statistics show there is less danger to these children," he said.

He said as the state government had made it clear that there would be no more lockdowns due to the adverse economic impact, it would only make sense to prevent the spread of Covid-19 as much as possible.



Inside looking out: Covid-19 patients peeking outside from a quarantine centre at the Sandakan sports complex. The centre was reopened following the rise in cases in the area. — Bernama

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NATION

'High jab rate will keep cases mild'

MOH: Public assured of no more lockdowns as vaccination coverage has helped

BY JOSEPH KAOS, JR
and LIEW JIA XIAN
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PETALING JAYA: While the current Omicron wave may see Malaysia's Covid-19 figures surge up to 22,000 cases a day, the Health Ministry feels that these will mostly comprise mild infections.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said this was due to Malaysia's wide vaccination coverage, which would ensure that severity of Covid-19 infections remained low.

He also assured the public that the country would not go down the route of implementing lockdowns again even though infections could soar as the focus would be on vaccination and the compliance of standard operating procedures (SOP).

"We have expected the number of Covid-19 cases to go up because the Omicron variant makes the virus more transmissible. The situation might peak in the next couple of weeks and we are monitoring this closely."

"However, the severity of infection is much less. Hospital and intensive care unit (ICU) admission rates are much lower than during the time when it peaked in August," said Dr Noor Hisham in an interview.

As of Feb 5, the country's infectivity level or Rt figure was at 1.2.

According to the CovidNow website, the national average bed utilisation for Covid-19 increased to 63.4% as of Saturday, from 61.8% the day before, while the rate for intensive care unit (ICU) was at 52%, up by 1%.



'I'm protected': A child with her mask on looks on while mum shops at Jonker Walk in Melaka. — Bernama

Dr Noor Hisham said based on the ministry's forecast modelling, cases could go up to 22,000 infections a day by the end of March should the infectivity level remain at 1.2.

The public, he added, could play their part in lowering the infectivity rate by getting their booster shots as well as adhering to Covid-19 SOP.

"The onus is on us to comply with all the public health and social measures plus increasing the vaccination and booster shot coverage to reduce the transmission and lower the Rt to less than 1," he said.

Yesterday, Malaysia's daily case numbers reached 10,089 – its first five-figure mark recorded in four months.

Dr Noor Hisham said out of the 10,089 cases, only 77 or 0.76% were those in Categories 3, 4 and 5. Of these, 25 cases were ICU admissions.

The rest of the 10,012 cases

(99.24%) were either mild or asymptomatic infections, which only required isolation at home.

"The low number of severe cases is because of our wide vaccination coverage," said Dr Noor Hisham.

As at Feb 5, 78.8% of Malaysia's total population had been fully inoculated against Covid-19 with a total of 25.7mil doses administered.

A total of 12.3 million booster shots have also been administered nationwide.

Citing Denmark which recently removed Covid-19 restrictions, including the requirement to wear masks and the usage of Covid pass, despite an increase in cases, Dr Noor Hisham said:

"We are not considering lockdowns at all. Continue compliance towards public health and social measures. Get vaccinated and get your booster shots."

"In Denmark, cases are soaring exponentially yet they eased all restrictions."

Daily Covid cases in the Scandinavian country reached an all time high of 55,000 on Feb 5.

In a tweet, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin again urged those who had yet to get their booster shots, especially senior citizens, to do so as soon as possible in view of the rise in cases.

"(We are) fully into the Omicron wave. The cases will hit 15,000 soon. There are still one million senior citizens who do not have a booster dose."

"Please inform your loved ones to get a booster dose immediately," he said.

Khairy said although vaccination would reduce the chances of infection, its main purpose was to reduce the severity of Covid-19 symptoms.

"With the booster dose, the protection from serious symptoms that can see you admitted to the hospital or intensive care units is better," he said.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com



'10,089 new infections, 137 ICU admissions'

By JUSTIN ZACK
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PETALING JAYA: Of the new 10,089 Covid-19 infections, 137 cases are being treated at the ICU.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, in his daily statement said that 77 cases have been classified as Categories Three, Four and Five, making up 0.8% of the daily figure yesterday. Seventy-one cases required assisted breathing, he added.

The country also recorded 6,460 recoveries.

Perlis and Sabah recorded the highest infectivity rate in the country, with 1.49 and 1.41 respectively.

The national rate is currently at 1.20.

Eleven new clusters have also been identified.

"Individuals that have tested positive and are listed as Categories 1 and 2A (light symptoms) and are not in the high risk groups do not need to report themselves at the

52.6% of adult population receive booster dose

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 12,307,360 individuals or 52.6% of the adult population in the country have received the Covid-19 booster dose as of Saturday.

According to the CovidNow portal, a total of 22,929,020 individuals or 97.9% of adults have completed their vaccination, while 99.2% or 23,222,612 individuals have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

As for adolescents aged 12 to 17, a total of 2,791,080 individuals or 88.7% have completed their vaccination, while 2,868,945 individuals or 91.2% have received at least

one dose of the vaccine.

On Saturday, a total of 73,328 vaccine doses were dispensed, with 15,673 as the first dose, 782 as the second dose and 56,873 as the booster dose, bringing the cumulative total of vaccine doses administered under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (PICK) to 63,914,165.

Meanwhile, according to the Health Ministry's Github portal, 14 Covid-19 deaths were reported yesterday, five in Selangor, four in Sabah, two in Kuala Lumpur and one each in Johor, Negeri Sembilan and Perak. — Bernama

Covid-19 Assessment Centres (CAC) and would only need to do self assessments via the Health Assessment Tool located in the MySejahtera app.

"Those under Categories 2B (medium symptoms) and higher, regardless if they are under the high risk groups, and those with worsening symptoms, must report themselves at the CAC or their nearest hospitals for further checks. They do not have to wait for the CAC to call them," he said.

Dr Noor Hisham added that patients who had no symptoms and have completed their vaccinations will only need to be isolated for seven days. Those with symptoms and non-completed vaccinations or without vaccinations will be isolated for 10 days.

"Those that have yet to receive their vaccines and have never been infected are most at risk of getting infected. The ministry advises them to register and get vaccinated immediately," he said.

Indonesia helps Melaka health tourism, hospitality

MELAKA: The state government will foster cooperation with Pekanbaru and Dumai in Indonesia to fill vacancies in Melaka's hospitality and health tourism sectors.

State tourism, heritage and culture committee chairman Datuk Muhammad Jailani Khamis said these two sectors were experiencing a workforce shortage, especially among locals.

"We have four private hospitals and Melaka is known for health tourism and many hotels."

"However, we face problems as the local workforce shun the minimum wage."

"So, one solution is to provide opportunities for Indonesians to undergo their internship in Melaka, maybe for six months in both sectors," he told Bernama after officiating the Melaka Coffee Festival 2022 here today.

He said the cooperation would be discussed with representatives of relevant agencies in Indonesia during his week-long working visit to Jakarta starting tomorrow.

He said the discussion would also involve post-Covid-19 measures to revive the tourism industries in

"One solution is to provide opportunities for Indonesians to undergo internships."

Datuk Muhammad Jailani Khamis

Melaka and Indonesia, especially in the health tourism sector.

In another development, Muhammad Jailani said tourism industry players in the state were reminded to consistently implement the standard operating procedure (SOP) to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"Tourist arrivals to Melaka have increased, especially in the first month of this year, but we also need to ensure that the SOP is complied with as the daily number of Covid-19 cases is increasing," he added.

AKHBAR : THE SUN ON MONDAY

MUKA SURAT : 1

RUANGAN : FRONT PAGE

Go for it

■ BY SURAYA ALI
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KUALA LUMPUR: To parents who are still in two minds about vaccinating their young children against Covid-19, medical experts have this piece of advice: Have them take the jab.

Given that classes are resuming, every effort must be made to keep children safe when they are back in school, said Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai.

To assuage parents' fears about side effects and reactions to the vaccine, Koh gave an assurance that it is safe for young children.

The Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) kicked off in the Klang Valley on Feb 3 and covers children aged five to 12.

Koh pointed out that with teenagers and adults largely vaccinated, the time had come to vaccinate young children.

"This is the next step in the national effort to bring the pandemic under control."

He said the vaccine for those aged 12 and below, which has been given conditional approval by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency, was formulated for this particular group of children.

➤ Health experts recommend children aged five to 12 be vaccinated to boost their safety at school

"This is a new paediatric vaccine. Paediatricians and general practitioners have been vaccinating children from birth and are therefore experienced in this," he said to allay fears of possible side effects.

He said in any case, the programme is voluntary and parents should be the ones to decide on the welfare of their children.

Koh added that parents who are still hesitant should speak to their children's doctor.

"Don't be quick to trust messages on vaccination for children that have been shared on social media."

"Instead, parents should arm themselves with the proper knowledge based on scientific evidence from recognised health authorities to ensure peace of mind," he said.

Ara Damansara Medical Centre consultant paediatrician and head of paediatrics Dr Rakhee Yadav said the vaccines given to children were different from those given to adults.

"Each child will receive a dose of 0.2ml, which contains 10 micrograms of the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA paediatric vaccine. This is one-third of what is given to adults," she told *theSun*.

To parents who are concerned about the long-term effects, Rakhee said they should understand that the vaccine stays in the body only for a few hours.

"The vaccine is designed to break down into smaller proteins by normal physiological processes and leave the body within hours. Its only purpose is to send a signal to the body's immune system to create antibodies and once it has done so, the vaccine will be degraded and leaves the body," she said.

Rakhee added that if parents were concerned about allergic reactions, they should have their children vaccinated at medical facilities or hospitals rather than vaccination centres.

Turn to
page 4

AKHBAR : THE SUN ON MONDAY
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is now facing the full onslaught of the Omicron variant, and the number of new infections is likely to hit 15,000 a day very soon.

In a tweet yesterday, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said this has made it all the more urgent for senior citizens to go for their booster shots.

"At least one million senior citizens in the country have not received their booster shots. Please get your beloved parents to go for their booster doses immediately," he said.

Khairy was responding to a tweet by Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah forecasting a surge in the number of new infections up to March 31.

The forecast was contained in a susceptible, exposed, infectious and recovered model image, Bernama reported.

In a subsequent tweet, Khairy called on the people to get booster shots. He stressed that the main purpose of the Covid-19 vaccine was to reduce the severity of symptoms in the event one is infected.

"With a booster dose, you have better protection against serious symptoms that can lead to hospitalisation or ICU admission.

Full onslaught of Omicron

➤ Infections involving new dominant strain expected to soon hit 15,000 per day

Take the booster."

The number of new Covid cases in the country yesterday exceeded the 10,000 mark, with 10,089 cases reported as of noon, bringing the cumulative number of cases to 2,914,220.

In Kuching, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Institute of Health and Community Medicine director Dr David Perera said the Omicron variant has replaced Delta as the dominant strain in the state.

In his latest report to Sarawak Disaster Management Committee chairman Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas yesterday, Perera revealed that 78% of all new cases detected from Jan 3 to Jan 26 were of the Omicron strain.

Perera said 58 samples were successfully sequenced over the period and 45 were of the

Omicron variant while 13 were of the Delta strain.

"The 78% detection rate suggests that Omicron has replaced Delta as the dominant variant circulating in Sarawak," he said, adding that the Omicron cases were detected in samples taken from Kuching, Samarahan, Sibul, Kapit, Mukah and Miri.

Perera said the majority were of the BA.1.1 lineage but three cases of the more infectious BA.2 were identified in Kapit and most of the cases occurred through community transmission.

In light of the increasing number of cases in the country, he advised those who have yet to get their booster dose to do so immediately.

Perera, who is a member of the Sarawak

Covid-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, said studies show that a booster shot was necessary to boost waning neutralising antibody levels to protect from Omicron infection.

He also reminded the people to continue complying strictly with the standard operating procedures and to avoid community gatherings to prevent further spread of the virus.

Vaccination for children in Penang begins today

GEORGE TOWN: The National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) in Penang will commence today, said state Agrotechnology and Food Safety, Rural Development and Health Committee chairman Dr Norlela Ariffin.

She said for a start, PICKids will be carried out at the Penang Hospital and Seberang Jaya Hospital for children with comorbidities or those in high-risk groups.

"Other hospitals are yet to be involved in this initial stage and for healthy children, they will be vaccinated either at health clinics or at their respective schools. Based on available information, there are 160,000 children aged five to 11 in Penang," she said when contacted yesterday.

PICKids has started in the Klang Valley for children aged five to 11 who have been registered by their parents on a voluntary basis.

Meanwhile, Norlela said two more education clusters were reported in Penang on Saturday, bringing the total number of active clusters linked to educational institutions in the state to 12.

She said the two new clusters were the Bandar Putra Bertam Cluster, namely at the Madrasah Al-Aminiah Bertam Tahfiz (Vocational) in North Seberang Perai and the Jalan Bukit Minyak Dua Cluster, involving the Seberang Perai Vocational College in Central Seberang Perai.

"Based on the distribution of Covid-19 cases involving schools from Jan 30 to Feb 5,



The PICKids vaccination programme started in the Klang Valley on Feb 3. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

there were cases detected in 60 primary and secondary schools in Penang."

She also advised the public to continue to adhere to standard operating procedures to curb the spread of the Covid-19 infection as

there were currently 19 active clusters in Penang, namely 12 clusters linked to educational institutions, three each in manufacturing and workplace sectors and one at a detention centre. — Bernama

Vaccine used safely in 100 countries for 10 million children

"Medical personnel are always on standby at hospitals to treat them if necessary," she said, adding that the vaccine is safe and has a 91% efficacy rate against Covid-19.

According to Rakhee, there have been no major safety concerns and the vaccine has been used in more than 100

countries and almost 10 million children have received it.

Under PICKids, a special vaccine formulation for children by Pfizer is used. It is a two-dose regime, with an eight-week interval.

The programme is not compulsory and would prioritise children with underlying

conditions such as chronic respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, immuno-suppression, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and nerve disease.

Registration is via MySejahtera under the "vaccine dependent" option and parents can choose the date, time and place they wish to have their children vaccinated.

From front page