

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 14

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Jumlah pesakit masuk wad meningkat 33 peratus

Kes baharu menurun kepada 3,936 kelmarin

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Putrajaya: Jumlah kemasukan pesakit COVID-19 ke hospital awam bagi kategori satu dan dua serta tiga hingga lima masing-masing meningkat 33 peratus dengan penggunaan katil unit rawatan rapi (ICU) turut meningkat tiga peratus dalam tempoh 10 Julai hingga Ahad lalu atau Minggu Epidemiologi (ME) 28/2022.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata dalam tempoh itu jumlah kes baharu turut meningkat 23.4 peratus iaitu 26,355 kes berbanding 21,355 kes pada minggu sebelumnya.

Beliau berkata, peningkatan paling tinggi membabitkan kes import yang mendapat jangkitan dari luar negara iaitu sebanyak 26.6 peratus atau 30 kes kepada 38

kes, manakala bagi penularan tempatan meningkat 23.4 peratus (21,325 kes kepada 26,317 kes).

"Bagi peratusan pengisian katil untuk fasiliti COVID-19, penggunaan katil bukan kritikal meningkat dua peratus, diikuti ICU meningkat tiga peratus serta di Pusat Rawatan COVID-19 Berisiko Rendah (PKRC), kekal dan tiada perubahan," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, bagi kes positif yang dipantau melalui Pusat Penilaian COVID-19 (CAC), ia menerima peningkatan kedatangan pesakit 23.1 peratus.

"Bilangan kes COVID-19 baharu yang menjalani pemantauan di rumah meningkat 41.3 peratus dan pesakit yang dirujuk CAC ke PKRC dan hospital pula meningkat 18.2 peratus.

Kes sembuh meningkat

"Trend kes aktif yang dipantau secara maya (CAC maya) pada akhir ME 28/2022 pula meningkat 33.8 peratus berbanding pada akhir minggu lalu iaitu daripada 53,306 kes kepada 71,326 kes," katanya.

Mengulas kes sembuh di negara ini, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, ia turut meningkat 16.8 peratus iaitu daripada 16,379 kes kepada 19,136 kes.



Jumlah kemasukan pesakit bagi kategori satu hingga lima ke hospital awam bertambah antara tempoh 10 Julai hingga Ahad lalu. (Foto hiasan)

"Bilangan kes kematian pada ME 28/2022 menunjukkan peningkatan 2.6 peratus (38 kes kepada 39 kes) dan purata kes aktif setiap hari bagi ME 28/2022 adalah 38,110 iaitu terdapat peningkatan 18.6 peratus berbanding minggu sebelumnya," katanya.

Mengulas kes Penyakit Seperti Influenza (ILI) membabitkan kes COVID-19, Dr Noor Hisham ber-

kata, hasil surveilans di lokasi sentinel seluruh negara menunjukkan peningkatan 8.5 peratus kepada 11.5 peratus berbanding 10.6 peratus sebelumnya.

Sementara itu, angka kes baharu COVID-19 kelmarin menurun kepada 3,936 kes berbanding 5,047 kes direkodkan Sabtu lalu.

Berdasarkan maklumat di laman COVIDNow setakat tengah

Peningkatan paling tinggi membabitkan kes import yang mendapat jangkitan dari luar negara iaitu sebanyak 26.6 peratus atau 30 kes kepada 38 kes, manakala bagi penularan tempatan meningkat 23.4 peratus

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan



malam kelmarin, daripada jumlah itu sebanyak 3,935 kes adalah penularan tempatan, manakala satu lagi mendapat jangkitan dari luar negara.

Sebanyak tujuh kematian direkodkan kelmarin menjadikan angka kematian mencecah 35,862 kes serta jumlah kumulatif meningkat kepada 4,622,981 kes, selain 528 kemasukan hospital.

Selain itu, seramai 40,933 pesakit daripada 42,541 kumulatif kes aktif menjalani kuarantin sendiri di rumah, manakala 33 orang ditempatkan di PKRC.

Daripada jumlah kes aktif itu, seramai 1,484 pesakit menerima rawatan di hospital dengan 38 pesakit daripada 61 ditempatkan di ICU yang memerlukan bantuan pernafasan.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 41

RUANGAN : DUNIA

Penularan COVID-19

Indonesia memasuki gelombang keempat

4,329 jangkitan baharu direkod Sabtu lalu susulan penularan pantas subvarian Omicron

Jakarta: Indonesia mengesahkan negara itu kini memasuki gelombang keempat jangkitan COVID-19 berpunca daripada subvarian Omicron yang pantas menular.

Jakarta Post melaporkan, Indonesia merekodkan 4,329 jangkitan baharu Sabtu lalu, jumlah kes harian tertinggi sejak 25 Mac, menurut data rasmi daripada pasukan petugas kebangsaan COVID-19.

Dari 10 Julai hingga 16 Julai, negara itu mencatatkan 22,684 kes baharu iaitu meningkat 27.6 peratus berbanding minggu sebelumnya dengan 16,426 kes baharu.

Ia kini mempunyai sejumlah

26,594 kes aktif.

Bagaimanapun, angka itu mungkin tidak menggambarkan dengan tepat skala sebenar jangkitan komuniti semasa.

Penularan berlaku kerana kurang jumlah ujian dan langkah pengesanan kontak, kata pakar.

Sementara itu, Tempo pula melaporkan, jurucakap kerajaan bagi pengendalian COVID-19, Wiku Adisasmito berkata, liputan vaksin penggalak di negara ini menurun dengan ketara.

Liputan vaksin penggalak menurun

Data menunjukkan kadar liputan vaksin di 28 wilayah masih di bawah 30 peratus.

"Jika dilihat daripada kadar liputan vaksin penggalak setiap wilayah, kadar tertinggi dicatatkan di Bali mencecah 58 peratus.

"(Ia) diikuti Jakarta, Kepulauan Riau, Jogjakarta, Jawa Barat, dan Kalimantan Timur walaupun kadar liputannya belum mencapai 50 peratus," katanya dalam satu kenyataan.

Wiku menggariskan, suntikan penggalak adalah sangat penting untuk mengekalkan imuniti orang ramai terhadap

jangkitan coronavirus.

Selain itu, varian virus baharu iaitu Omicron BA.4 dan BA.5 merekodkan sehingga 81 peratus daripada varian COVID-19.

Beliau turut menegaskan kerajaan sudah berusaha menyediakan pusat vaksinasi di setiap wilayah dan bekerjasama dengan Forum Komunikasi Pimpinan Wilayah (Forkompinda).

Di Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, dan Bekasi, terdapat 70 pusat vaksinasi dan jumlahnya akan terus meningkat.

"Diharapkan kerajaan dan rakyat akan terus mempercepatkan liputan vaksin, termasuk suntikan penggalak dan berdisiplin dalam melaksanakan protokol kesihatan.

"Jika kedua-dua usaha ini dijalankan secara kolektif, Indonesia boleh mencapai daya tahan dan kesihatan awam yang tinggi," kata Wiku.

Ketika trend COVID-19 meningkat baru-baru ini, Menteri Dalam Negeri, Muhammad Tito Karnavian mengeluarkan surat pekeliling pada 11 Julai lalu mengesahkan pemimpin serantau mempercepatkan pemberian vaksin penggalak di wilayah masing-masing.

Macau mulakan ujian saringan pusingan ke-11

Hong Kong: Macau memulakan ujian saringan COVID-19 pusingan ke-11 untuk penduduknya semalam susulan hab kasino terbesar di dunia itu melanjutkan penutupan kasino dan perniagaan lain dalam memeringi penularan terburuk sejak wabak itu bermula.

Meskipun kelmarin berlaku penurunan jangkitan yang berterusan, yang menyaksikan hanya 27 kes baharu dilaporkan, pihak berkuasa menegaskan lebih 600,000 penduduk bandar itu mesti tinggal di rumah dengan semua perniagaan yang tidak penting ditutup sehingga Jumaat.

Kini 90 peratus penduduk sudah diberi vaksin sepenuhnya, namun ia adalah kali pertama Macau terpaksa bergelut dengan varian Omicron yang merebak dengan pantas.

Wilayah pentadbiran khas China itu memulakan tempoh berkurung pada 11 Julai lalu dan dikesan berlaku lebih daripada 1,700 jangkitan sejak pertengahan Jun, apabila sebahagian besar bebas COVID-19 selepas penularan wabak pada Oktober 2021.

Bekas jajahan Portugis itu juga hanya mempunyai sebuah

hospital awam dan sistem perubatan dalam keadaan tertekan sebelum wabak itu bermula.

Dasar sifar COVID-19

Macau mengikut dasar 'sifar COVID-19' China untuk menghapuskan semua wabak dalam hampir semua kes dan ia bertentangan dengan trend global untuk cuba hidup bersama virus itu.

Ujian coronavirus untuk semua penduduk itu akan dilakukan sekurang-kurangnya dua kali minggu ini, dengan ujian antigen pantas juga dilakukan.

Enam pengendali kasino, Sands China, Wynn Macau, MGM China, Melco Resorts, Galaxy Entertainment, SJM Holding turut kerugian menjelang bidaan untuk lesen baharu, bulan depan.

Jangkitan harian di situ adalah lebih sedikit berbanding tempat lain seperti jirannya, Hong Kong, yang mana kes melonjak lebih daripada 3,000 sehari bulan ini selepas sekatan mula dikurangkan.

Macau yang mempunyai sempadan terbuka dengan tanah besar China dan ramai penduduk tinggal dan bekerja di bandar bersebelahan Zhuhai. REUTERS



Penduduk memakai pelitup muka beratur untuk menjalani ujian saringan COVID-19 di Macau.

(Foto REUTERS)

Ghana kenal pasti 2 kes pertama virus Marburg



Belum ada rawatan atau vaksin untuk virus Marburg yang dipercayai hampir sama bahaya dengan virus Ebola.

(Foto hiasan)

Accra: Dua kes virus Marburg yang membawa maut sudah dikenal pasti di Ghana, kali pertama penyakit seperti virus Ebola itu ditemui di negara Afrika Barat.

Perkhidmatan Kesihatan Ghana (GHS) berkata, awal bulan ini, sampel darah yang diambil daripada dua orang di wilayah Ashanti selatan mencadangkan mengenai virus Marburg dan sampel dihantar ke Institut Pasteur di Senegal sudah diagnosis.

"Ini adalah kali pertama Ghana mengesahkan Penyakit Virus Marburg," kata ketua GHS, Patrick Kuma-Aboagye dalam kenyataan.

Belum ada rawatan atau vaksin untuk Marburg, yang dipercayai hampir sama bahaya dan membunuh dengan virus Ebola. Gejalanya adalah demam

panas serta pendarahan dalaman dan luaran.

GHS berkata, sejumlah 98 orang yang dikenal pasti sebagai kes kontak kini turut berada di bawah kuarantin serta menyatakan bahawa tiada kes Marburg lain dikesan di Ghana.

Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) berkata, Guinea turut mengesahkan satu kes dalam wabak yang diisytiharkan berakhir pada September 2021 itu.

Boleh merebak daripada haiwan

Menurut WHO, wabak dan kes sporadik Marburg di Afrika dilaporkan di Angola, Republik Demokratik Congo, Kenya, Afrika Selatan dan Uganda.

Ia boleh merebak daripada

haiwan yang dijangkiti, termasuk kelawar.

"Oleh itu, orang ramai dinasihatkan supaya mengelakkan kegua yang didiami koloni kelawar dan memasak sepenuhnya produk daging sebelum dimakan," nasihat pihak berkuasa kesihatan Ghana.

Mereka yang dikenal pasti pernah berhubung dengan penghidap, termasuk kakitangan perubatan, mesti mengasingkan diri.

Penyakit virus itu dikatakan menyerang penghidap secara tiba-tiba dengan demam panas dan sakit kepala yang teruk.

Kata WHO lagi, kadar kematian dalam kes yang disahkan berkisar antara 24 peratus hingga 88 peratus dalam kes sebelumnya, bergantung kepada keseriusan virus dan pengurusan kes.

AFP

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : LOKAL

Puntung bersepah bawah meja

JKNJ keluar 62 notis kompaun atas kesalahan merokok di premis makanan babit nilai RM15,500

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Johor Bahru

Tindakan segelintir individu ingkar larangan merokok di premis makanan, seolah-olah mencabar Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri (JKNJ) Johor untuk mengambil tindakan tegas.

Hasilnya, satu operasi bersepadu dijalankan JKN Johor di seluruh negeri ini menyakikan 62 notis kompaun dikeluarkan atas kesalahan merokok di premis makanan mengikut Peraturan 11(1)(d) Peraturan-Peraturan Kawalan Hasil Tembakau (PPKHT) 2004 membabitkan kompaun bernilai RM15,500, kelmarin.

Akur dan tidak mempertikaikan tindakan JKNJ membuktikan mereka yang dikompaun tahu diri mereka melakukan kesalahan melanggar undang-undang.

Pengarah Kesihatan Negeri Johor Datuk Dr Aman Rabu berkata, situasi itu menunjukkan kesedaran tentang larangan merokok di premis makanan masih kurang memuaskan.

"Kesedaran tentang larangan ini tidak memuaskan hati. Jika tengok di premis



DR Aman (berdiri dua dari kanan) melihat pegawai penguat kuasa JKNJ menjalankan operasi di kedai makan di sekitar Johor Bahru. - Gambar NSTP/IZZ LAILY HUSSEIN

makanan ini, ada yang merokok dengan adanya kotak rokok di atas meja, adanya puntung rokok bersepah di bawah meja, kita rasa kesedaran itu masih kurang.

"Kita cuba beri kesedaran kepada mereka dan kita harap ahli keluarga atau sahabat tidak merokok boleh sama-sa-

ma bantu beri kesedaran.

"Tetapi, sepanjang operasi, mereka yang dikompaun ini patuh dan sedar kesalahan mereka melanggar undang-undang," katanya.

Beliau berkata ketika ditemui pada Operasi Bersepadu Penguatkuasaan PPKHT 2004 di kedai makan sekitar bandar

raya ini, kelmarin.

Operasi bersepadu bersama Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna (KPD-NHEP), Jabatan Kastam Diraja Malaysia (JKDM) dan Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan (PBT) dijalankan secara se-

rentak di seluruh negeri bermula jam 8.30 malam hingga 3 pagi semalam.

Dalam operasi, 125 premis diperiksa dan 143 notis kesalahan dikeluarkan terhadap pelbagai kesalahan membabitkan keseluruhan kompaun RM47,750.

Menurut Dr Aman, dari-



Sepanjang operasi, mereka yang dikompaun ini patuh dan sedar kesalahan mereka melanggar undang-undang"

Dr Aman

pada jumlah berkenaan, 62 notis dikeluarkan terhadap kesalahan merokok di premis makanan dengan kompaun RM15,500, selain 28 notis atas kesalahan menjual atau menawarkan jualan apa-apa rokok di bawah harga minimum dengan kompaun bernilai RM14,000.

"Kita mengeluarkan tujuh notis atas kesalahan menjual atau menawarkan untuk jualan apa-apa hasil tembakau dengan harga jualan runcit yang tidak diluluskan oleh Pengarah mengikut Peraturan 8A(5A) yang mana jumlah kompaun boleh dikenakan sebanyak RM3,500.

"Selain itu, pelbagai jenama rokok batang dianggar bernilai RM47,750 dirampas atas pelanggaran pelbagai kesalahan mengikut PPKHT 2004," katanya.

Kes baharu turun pada 3,936

Kuala Lumpur: Angka kes baharu Covid-19 setakat kelmarin menurun kepada sebanyak 3,936 kes berbanding 5,047 kes direkodkan pada Sabtu.

Berdasarkan maklumat di laman CovidNow, 3,935 kes membabitkan penularan tempatan manakala satu kes mendapat jangkitan dari luar negara.

Bagaimanapun tujuh kematian direkodkan menjadikan angka kematian mencecah 35,862 kes serta jumlah kumulatif meningkat kepada 4,622,981 kes, selain 528 kemasukan hospital.

Selain itu, 40,933 pesakit

1,484

Jumlah pesakit
mendapatkan rawatan
di hospital

daripada 42,541 kumulatif kes aktif menjalani kuarantin sendiri di rumah dan 33 ditempatkan di Pusat Kuarantin dan Rawatan Covid-19 (PKRC).

Daripada jumlah kes aktif itu, 1,484 pesakit menerima rawatan di hospital dengan 38 pesakit daripada 61 yang ditempatkan di unit rawatan rapi (ICU)

memerlukan bantuan pernafasan.

Sementara itu, 3,899 pesakit pula dilaporkan sembuh menjadikan keseluruhan kes sembuh mencapai 4,548,514.

Dalam pada itu, 27,380,770 atau 83.8 peratus daripada populasi Malaysia lengkap vaksinasi manakala 28,057,624 (85.9 peratus) menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos.

Pada masa sama, seramai 16,164,047 individu (49.5 peratus) sudah mengambil dos penggalak pertama dan 217,713 (0.7 peratus) menerima dua dos penggalak.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 21

RUANGAN : LOKAL

Pesakit Covid-19 dimasukkan ke hospital meningkat 33 peratus

Kuala Lumpur: Jumlah dimasukkan pesakit Covid-19 ke hospital awam bagi kategori satu hingga lima menunjukkan peningkatan 33 peratus dalam tempoh 10 Julai hingga Ahad lalu.

Dalam laporan Minggu Epidemiologi (ME) 28/2022 itu, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, dalam tempoh terbabit, jumlah kes baharu meningkat 23.4 peratus iaitu 26,355 kes berbanding 21,355 kes pada minggu sebelumnya.

Menurutnya, peningkatan paling tinggi membabitkan kes import yang mendapat jangkitan dari luar negara iaitu 26.6 peratus atau 30 kes kepada 38 kes manakala bagi penularan tempatan meningkat 23.4 peratus (21,325 kes kepada 26,317 kes).

"Bagi peratusan pengisian katil untuk fasiliti Covid-19, penggunaan katil bu-



Trend kes aktif yang dipantau secara maya (CAC maya) pada akhir ME 28/2022 pula meningkat 33.8 peratus berbanding pada akhir minggu lalu iaitu daripada 53,306 kes kepada 71,326 kes"

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

kan kritikal meningkat dua peratus, diikuti Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) meningkat tiga peratus serta di Pusat Rawatan Covid-19 Berisiko Rendah (PKRC) kekal dan tiada perubahan," katanya.

Beliau berkata, bagi kes positif yang dipantau melalui Pusat Penilaian Covid-19 (CAC), mereka menerima peningkatan keda-

tangan pesakit 23.1 peratus.

"Bilangan kes Covid-19 baharu menjalani pemantauan di rumah meningkat 41.3 peratus dan pesakit dirujuk CAC ke PKRC dan hospital pula meningkat 18.2 peratus.

"Trend kes aktif yang dipantau secara maya (CAC maya) pada akhir ME 28/2022 pula meningkat 33.8 peratus berbanding pada akhir minggu lalu iaitu daripada 53,306 kes kepada 71,326 kes," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, bilangan kes sembuh turut meningkat 16.8 peratus iaitu daripada 16,379 kes kepada 19,138 kes.

"Bilangan kes kematian ME 28/2022 menunjukkan peningkatan 2.6 peratus (38 kes kepada 39 kes) dan purata kes aktif setiap hari bagi ME 28/2022 adalah 38,110 terdapat peningkatan 18.6 peratus berbanding minggu sebelum," katanya.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Alami simptom lebih teruk, hadapi isu kekurangan ubat

SHAH ALAM

Belanja tinggi untuk rawat influenza

Rata-rata ibu bapa yang mempunyai anak dan keluarga yang dijangkiti influenza mengakui mereka menghadapi kesukaran terutama dari segi penjagaan serta perbelanjaan rawatan.

Bagi mereka yang baru pertama berhadapan dengan jangkitan tersebut dalam kalangan ahli keluarga, situasi diserang influenza dengan simptom lebih teruk berbanding demam biasa seperti peningkatan tinggi suhu badan, sakit tekak dan batuk berlebihan pastinya sangat membimbangkan.

Situasi jangkitan influenza yang membabitkan sebahagian besar ahli keluarga termasuk ibu bapa dan anak turut memberikan beban kewangan yang tinggi bagi menampung keperluan kos pemeriksaan, perubatan serta pengambilan vaksin.

Menurut seorang peniaga, Hazatul Iffah Hamid, 43, dari Muar, Johor, kos untuk memeriksa dan membeli ubat bagi tiga orang ahli keluarga yang tidak memiliki sebarang per-



HAZATUL

lindungan insurans kesihatan boleh mencecah sehingga RM900.

Katanya, kos membiayai perubatan keluarga yang tahap jangkitan melibatkan lebih dua orang ahlinya adalah agak mahal.

Hazatul berkata, untuk ubat sahaja, ia boleh mencecah sehingga RM250 bagi seorang pesakit dan itu tidak termasuk kos pemeriksaan dan pengambilan vaksin.

"Tambahan pula sekarang ini kita hadapi isu kekurangan ubat," katanya yang pernah di-



NOR AKMAR

jangkiti influenza bersama dua orang anaknya.

Seorang suri rumah rumah, Nor Akmar Abdul Malik, 34, pula berkata, sebagai ibu yang tidak pernah berhadapan dengan jangkitan influenza dalam keluarga sebelum ini, ia sememangnya sesuatu yang membimbangkan lebih-lebih lagi anaknya pada ketika itu baru berusia tiga tahun.

"Mula-mula itu kita ingat demam biasa. Tapi bila bagi ubat demam dan tuam pun suhu masih terus tinggi. Jadi malam pertama anak saya kena itu memang tidak boleh tidur sebab

“

Mula-mula itu kita ingat demam biasa. Tapi bila bagi ubat demam dan tuam pun suhu masih tinggi. Jadi malam pertama anak saya kena itu memang tidak boleh tidur sebab perlu sentiasa tuam badan dia.”

- Nor Akmar

perlu sentiasa tuam badan dia. "Waktu itu risau kalau biarkan suhu tinggi anak akan berisiko terkena sawan," ujarnya yang terus membawa anaknya ke hospital.

Nor Akmar berkata, selepas melakukan pemeriksaan dan pengambilan ubatan, dia bersama anaknya terus tinggal kuarantin di rumah sehingga sembuh pulih.

Kemasukan pesakit Covid-19 ke hospital meningkat



NOOR HISHAM

KUALA LUMPUR - Bilangan kes baharu Covid-19 pada Minggu Epidemiologi ke-28 (ME 28/2022) dari 10 hingga 16 Julai meningkat sebanyak 23.4 peratus berbanding ME 27/2022 iaitu 26,355 kes daripada 21,355 kes.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, kes tempatan Covid-19 pada ME ke-28 meningkat sebanyak 23.4 peratus menjadi 26,317 kes daripada 21,325 kes pada minggu sebelumnya manakala kes import meningkat sebanyak 26.6 peratus daripada 30 kes pada minggu se-

belumnya kepada 38 kes.

"Bilangan kes sembuh pada ME 28/2022 meningkat 6.8 peratus kepada 19,138 kes daripada 16,379 kes pada ME 27/2022," katanya menerusi kenyataan pada Isnin.

Menurut Dr Noor Hisham, bilangan kes kematian pada ME 28/2022 menunjukkan peningkatan sebanyak 2.6 peratus (38 kes kepada 39 kes) berbanding ME 27/2022 sementara purata kes aktif setiap hari bagi ME 28/2022 adalah 38,110 iaitu peningkatan sebanyak 18.6 peratus.

Katanya, jumlah kemasukan pe-

sakit Covid-19 ke hospital awam bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk meningkat sebanyak 33 peratus, dengan pesakit kategori satu dan dua meningkat 33 peratus manakala pesakit kategori tiga, empat dan lima turut mencatatkan peningkatan sama.

Menurut Dr Noor Hisham, peraturan pengisian katil fasiliti Covid-19 pada ME 28/2022 bagi katil bukan kritikal meningkat sebanyak dua peratus; katil Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) meningkat sebanyak tiga peratus; dan tiada perubahan pada katil PKRC. - Bernama

Hari-hari ada kes influenza tapi bekalan ubat habis, kata doktor

SHAH ALAM - Kebanyakan individu yang datang ke klinik setiap hari adalah mereka yang dijangkiti influenza dan Covid-19, kata seorang pengamal perubatan am di sebuah klinik Desa Petaling, Kuala Lumpur, Dr Eratha Krishnan Gobinadan.

Menurutnya, setiap hari pihaknya mengesan

sekarangnya-kurangnya enam orang dijangkiti influenza manakala lima lagi Covid-19.

Namun jelas beliau, pihaknya menghadapi masalah untuk merawat pesakit influenza.

"Bila kita dapat tahu ada kes influenza, kita nak rawat tak ada ubat. Ubat influenza itu tidak ada stok dan susah sangat (nak peroleh). Itu masalah besar se-

karang," katanya kepada Sinar Harian.

Dr Eratha berkata, jika tiada ubat, pihaknya akan merujuk pesakit ke hospital untuk mendapatkan ubat di samping pihak klinik memberikan ubat batuk, selesema dan demam.

Tambahnya, ubat influenza juga sukar didapati di farmasi kerajaan negara pada waktu ini meng-

alami masalah kekurangan ubat.

"Kita tak tahu dari mana dan macam mana nak dapatkan (ubat). Kita telefon wakil perubatan daripada syarikat farmasi, mereka pun tak ada stok," katanya.

Disebabkan itu, beliau berharap kerajaan boleh mengatasi masalah kekurangan ubat sama ada dengan cara mengimport atau menghasilkan sendiri ubat.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 9

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Ramai kanak-kanak Malaysia bantut

Masalah tumbesaran di negara ini semakin membimbangkan

SYAJARATULHUDA
MOHAMAD ROSLI
GEORGETOWN

Kanak-kanak bantut akibat kekurangan pemakanan kronik di Malaysia adalah isu membimbangkan sedangkan negara kini mengalami pertumbuhan ekonomi yang pesat, pembangunan, peningkatan status sosioekonomi dan sistem penjagaan kesihatan.

Sehubungan itu, langkah Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar untuk menubuhkan Jawatankuasa Khas bagi membanteras pelbagai masalah pemakanan dalam kalangan kanak-kanak amat disokong.

Menurut Kaji Selidik Kesihatan dan Morbiditi Kebangsaan (NHMS) 2016, kadar bantut di-Malaysia ialah kira-kira 21 peratus iaitu tiga kali ganda lebih tinggi daripada keseluruhan ke-laziman tujuh peratus di negara berpendapatan sederhana yang mana Malaysia adalah salah satu daripadanya.

Hasil kajian itu menunjukkan, bilangan kanak-kanak bantut di bawah umur lima tahun meningkat daripada 17.7 peratus pada tahun 2015 kepada 21.8 peratus pada 2019.

Sejak pandemik

Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang (CAP), Mohideen Abdul Kader berkata, ke-

adaan pada ketika ini dilihat boleh menjadi lebih teruk kerana keluarga berpendapatan rendah terjejas akibat Covid-19 tidak mempunyai wang yang mencukupi untuk membeli makanan berkhasiat kepada anak-anak mereka.

Katanya, kemiskinan dan



Bantut merupakan kegagalan tumbesaran biasa kepada kanak-kanak kecil disebabkan pemakanan dan jangkitan yang lemah.

bantut adalah dua faktor yang boleh menjelaskan perkembangan minda kanak-kanak termasuk fungsi kognitif.

"Malaysia telah meratifikasi Konvensyen Hak Kanak-kanak (CRC). Oleh itu, keselamatan makanan dan kesihatan kanak-kanak adalah tanggungjawab negara.

"Kerajaan perlu membangunkan pendekatan holistik terhadap pemakanan dan tidak hanya melihat dari sektor kesihatan sahaja.

"Program pemberian makanan sekolah boleh membantu kanak-kanak yang kekurangan zat untuk pulih daripada bantut seperti program pemakanan sekolah di India yang membantu anak-anak pulih daripada penurunan pertumbuhan," katanya dalam satu kenyataan pada Isnin.

Tegas beliau, kerajaan juga harus meletakkan dasar meningkatkan akses keluarga kepada sumber makanan yang berkhiasat dan berpatutan.

"Satu kempen komunikasi massa di seluruh negara mengenai bantut dan pemakanan perlu dilaksanakan dengan segera memandangkan pengetahuan penduduk Malaysia tentang kesihatan adalah rendah dan masalah bantut tidak boleh dilihat dengan mata kasar.

"Ketika ini, terdapat banyak kempen awam diadakan selain pendidikan pemakanan untuk ibu mengandung dan menyusui dijalankan di klinik serta hospital.

"Selain itu, pendidikan amalan pemakanan bayi dan kanak-kanak diintegrasikan ke dalam program kesihatan awam di klinik. Ini termasuk penyebaran bahan bertulis, ceramah untuk ibu-ibu selepas bersalin, seminar dan juga demonstrasi masakan.

"Bagaimanapun, capaiannya terhad disebabkan penyertaan awam yang rendah," katanya.

Untuk rekod, bantut merupakan kegagalan tumbesaran yang biasa berlaku pada kanak-kanak kecil disebabkan pemakanan serta jangkitan yang lemah dan bukannya faktor genetik.

Kegagalan pertumbuhan ini berkait rapat dengan kemiskinan yang menyekat akses kepada kuantiti dan kualiti makanan.

Harga ubat perlu dikawal elak pencatutan

PUTRAJAYA - Kerajaan melalui Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) dan Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna (KPDNHEP) disaran melakukan kawalan harga terhadap ubat-ubatan.

Presiden Persatuan Farmasi Malaysia, Amrahi Buang berkata, tindakan itu bagi mengelakkan berlakunya pencatutan khususnya terhadap ubat-ubatan yang mengalami bekalan meruncing seperti demam, sesesema dan antibiotik.

"Penyelarasan harga merupakan suatu keadaan yang kompleks, namun dari segi dasar, ia perlu dilakukan demi kepentingan rakyat," katanya ketika dihubungi Sinar Harian pada Isnin.

Menurutnya, kekurangan bekalan ubat perlu dianggap sebagai sekuriti ubat-ubatan sebagaimana sekuriti makanan.

"Kerajaan perlu memandangkan dan menangani isu kekurangan bekalan ubat-ubatan ini dengan lebih serius lagi kerana ia melibatkan ke-

san kepada rakyat," katanya.

Beliau berkata, kekurangan bekalan ubat-ubatan di pasaran tempatan dikesan sejak Oktober tahun lalu.

"Walaupun kerajaan membenarkan penggunaan stok penimbun KKM, tetapi saya rasa ketidakstabilan bekalan ini akan terus berlaku sehingga pandemik Covid-19 benar-benar terkawal dan menjadi endemik," katanya.

Amrahi berkata, peningkatan kes influenza like illness (ILI) turut menjadi faktor penyumbang bekalan ubat-ubatan berada dalam keadaan mendesak.

"Kadaan itu memberi kesan terhadap bekalan sedia ada," katanya.

Ujarnya, semua pihak perlu bekerjasama untuk mencari jalan penyelesaian bersama dalam menghadapi isu kekurangan bekalan ubat.

"Jangan ada pihak yang menyorok bekalan untuk dapatkan keuntungan," tegasnya.

Tegas Amrahi, masyara-

ISU KEKURANGAN BEKALAN UBAT

kat juga diingatkan agar membeli ubat mengikut keperluan.

"Usah membazir membeli ubat yang tidak perlu," katanya.

Menyentuh mengenai peningkatan kos ubat-ubatan, beliau berkata, ia berlaku berdasarkan beberapa faktor, antaranya kawasan dan jenis pemilihan farmasi.

"Kos logistik adalah satu isu besar khusus nya di kawasan pedalaman termasuk Sabah dan Sarawak.

Harga ubat-ubatan adalah berbeza jika operasi sesebuah farmasi dikendalikan oleh seseorang ahli farmasi secara persendirian atau jenis rantaian kecil mahupun besar," katanya.

Katanya, kos operasi dan keupayaan premis untuk membeli ubat secara pukal adalah satu cabaran yang benar.

"Maka wujudlah kuota kuota di pasaran yang akhirnya memberi kesan kepada rakyat," katanya.

KANAK-KANAK BANTUT: BUKAN SEKADAR PENDEK



AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : NATION / NEWS

TABLING THIS WEEK

SUPPORT TOBACCO BILL, MPs URGED

Paediatricians say it will prevent children from taking up smoking

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SEVERAL paediatricians are urging members of parliament to vote for the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, which is to be tabled this week.

The paediatricians yesterday said the bill would not only curb smoking and vaping among children, but would also influence the health and social wellbeing of many generations.

The group said it was crucial to remember that the bill did not limit smoking in adults, but aimed to stop the sale of cigarettes and vape products to all persons born after 2005.

"The 2016 National Tobacco and E-cigarette survey among Malaysian Adolescents showed that 9.1 per cent of adolescents aged 10 to 19 were e-cigarette users.

"This amounts to at least 600,000 children, who started smoking around 14.

"The 2019 National Health and Morbidity Survey showed that 11.6 per cent of those aged 15 to 19 are cigarette smokers, while another 7.5 per cent are vaping.

"Overall, 15.6 per cent of this group are using tobacco products.

"It is expected that the number of e-cigarette users would have gone up since these two surveys were conducted.

"However, this remains an alarming finding, proving that smoking is an epidemic among our children."

The statement was signed by Datuk Dr Amar-Singh HSS, Datuk Dr Musa Mohd Nordin, Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail, Dr Selva Kumar, who is Malaysian Paediatric Association president, and Malaysian Association for Adolescent Health vice-president Dr Thiagaraj Nadarajaw.

They said most smokers picked up the habit when they were in their teens, seeing that vaping made the addiction easier to acquire.

"We are aware of this phenomenon, where younger children are introduced to these vaping products using attractive flavours, devices and the 'look-cool' appeal.

"Some progress to using more addictive and harmful drugs, which is why we appeal to our MPs to think about the health and wellbeing of our children.

"It is a vote for an investment in our children's present and future health and wellbeing.

"It is a vote that offers support to our health system to reduce a major disease burden. Please vote in favour of the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill.

"The impact on combating a major source of social ill in our society, the long-term reduction in health problems or deaths and the improved lifestyle for our children is immeasurable."

28TH EPIDEMIOLOGICAL WEEK

Covid hospitalisation rate jumps 9pc

KUALA LUMPUR: The Covid-19 hospitalisation rate has increased by nine per cent in the 28th Epidemiological Week (ME28) compared with the previous week.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah yesterday said hospitalisations of patients in all categories showed a 33 per cent increase within the one-week period.

"Intensive care unit admissions rose by three per cent, and admissions to low-risk Covid-19 quarantine and treatment centres were unchanged.

"Cases requiring respiratory assistance increased by 0.3

percent."

Dr Noor Hisham said the data also showed an increase of two per cent in hospital bed usage.

At the same time, cases referred to Covid-19 assessment centres increased by 23.1 per cent, and those undergoing home quarantine observations rose by 41.3 per cent.

On recoveries, he said, the figure increased by 16.8 per cent, from 16,379 cases in ME27 to 19,138 in ME28.

New cases also increased by 23.4 per cent, from 21,355 to 26,355 between both epidemiology weeks.

On daily infections, there were 3,936 cases on Sunday, a drop from 5,047 the previous day.

According to data from the Health Ministry's CovidNow website and Github, of the fresh cases, 3,935 were local transmissions and one was imported.

Selangor and Kuala Lumpur topped the list with 1,491 and 1,055 new cases, respectively.

Seven deaths were reported on Sunday, including three brought-in-dead cases, bringing the cumulative death toll to 35,855.

Meanwhile, 1,447,140 children aged 5 to 11 have been fully vaccinated.



A 'no smoking' sign at a restaurant in Kuala Lumpur.
FILE PIC

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NATION

Rush for fourth shot as cases rise

Omicron sub-variants create fears of another wave

By FATIMAH ZAINAL
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PETALING JAYA: There has been a 51% increase in the number of people being vaccinated over the last two weeks, as new Omicron sub-variants create fears of another Covid-19 wave.

According to figures from ProtectHealth, vaccination went up from 38,822 during the week of June 27-July 3 to 50,774 during the week of July 4-July 10, a 31% increase.

From the week of July 11-July 17, there was a 51% increase to 76,433.

As infections and hospitalisations rise across the country, health experts are also calling for Malaysians, especially those over 60 as well as the medically vulnerable, to get their second booster shot.

This is because the Omicron sub-variants are highly contagious and can bypass immunity from a past infection or vaccination.

Public health expert Prof Dr Moy Foong Ming of Universiti Malaya said the Omicron sub-variant BA.5 could evade antibody responses in people with previous Covid-19 infection and those who had been fully vaccinated and boosted.

"Reinfections may be inevitable but boosters will help provide protection against severe symptoms, hospitalisation and even death."

"Even though the BA.5 does not seem to cause more severe symptoms compared to BA.1 and BA.2, the elderly and vulnerable groups will likely experience severe symptoms," Prof Moy said.

She cautioned that if the total caseload increases tremendously, even with a low percentage of hospitalisation, the number will be a huge burden on the healthcare system.

"We don't want to lose precious lives if it can be prevented," she said.

For those below 60, it may not be necessary to take the second boost-

er at this moment.

"If this group of individuals had received their third dose, they should be well protected from severe symptoms," said Prof Moy.

"When new vaccines are able to bring a stronger immune response against all new variants, then a second booster may be offered to all."

Prof Moy also said Malaysians should consider taking a flu shot if they were in the high-risk group, especially those aged 65 and above, and with chronic health conditions such as diabetes and weakened immune system.

Public health expert Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said sub-variants BA.4 and BA.5 were known to evade immunity, hence breakthrough infections could occur.

"The risk will be reduced if you obtain another booster," she said.

"The elderly, immunocompromised, as well as people with morbidities and frontliners should be



Staying protected: Leow Pui Ling, 28, getting her second booster shot at iHEAL Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur. — FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

prioritised for a second booster. But now, even those who are young and have received only two doses should get a third jab," she said.

Prof Sharifa Ezat also reminded the public to get tested for Covid-19 and influenza if symptomatic, as these can mimic each other and it is possible to get infected with both.

"This impedes recovery. If possible, get vaccinated against both," she said.

"The government should work on

obtaining supply for flu tests and pushing the flu vaccine price down."

Volunteers For Community Engagement and Empowerment For Covid-19 chairman Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar reminded Malaysians to continue with good personal health practices such as wearing a face mask, avoiding crowded places, self-testing and quarantining if positive with Covid-19, as well as observing a good diet.

Better safe than sorry, say those getting second booster

PETALING JAYA: Some cautious Malaysians are deciding to boost now rather than later in a bid to shield themselves against the more contagious Covid-19 Omicron sub-variants currently driving up case numbers nationwide.

Business development manager Jenny Brown, 43, is one of the people planning to get their fourth shot soon.

"Thankfully I have never caught Covid-19, but prevention is better than cure. It is scary to see friends

who have been infected get reinfected.

"Also, there's a new strain and I hope with the booster, I'll be better protected or at the very least, experience very mild symptoms if I am infected," she said.

Content writer Joshua Fernandes, 26, is also wishing to take a second booster in light of the rising Covid-19 cases.

"Cases are rising so I should definitely take it. But I don't know yet where or how, hopefully it's not too

inconvenient," he said.

Although consultant Raymond Lim, 62, received his second booster a few weeks ago, and was reinfected with Covid-19 a few days ago, he believed that getting the booster was the right choice.

"This sub-variant is too strong. I tested positive but I'm now recovering and my symptoms are mild, such as sore throat, chills and cold sweats."

"Although getting a second booster did not prevent me from getting

Covid-19, at least it prevented my symptoms from being really severe," he said.

There are, however, those who preferred to wait for an updated Covid-19 vaccine that can tackle the new variants.

Housekeeper Simone Lee, 30, has not taken even the first booster, and has no intention of doing so despite the rise in cases.

"I would prefer if the pharmaceutical companies come up with an updated vaccine because I feel that

if we keep injecting a vaccine that is not effective, then it is quite pointless to keep taking it."

Housewife Azizah Mohd Ariffin, 29, also did not take her first booster as she had caught the virus before, and believes that her young age as well as her natural immunity from the previous infection are sufficient.

"So, despite only having taken two doses in 2021, I believe that my body is strong enough to fight another reinfection," Azizah said.

AKHBAR : THE SUN

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

Dengue infections on the rise in Sabah

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah has recorded an increase in dengue cases, at 1,791 as of July 2 compared with 887 cases reported in the same period last year, the Sabah state assembly was told yesterday.

Sabah Community Development and People's Well-Being Minister Datuk Shahelmei Yahya said the number showed an increase of 101.9%, prompting the state Health Department to take immediate steps

to address the situation.

"Proactive measures to deal with dengue cases are being actively implemented, including case monitoring and dengue control activities involving inspections at premises, mist spraying, removal of breeding grounds and health education.

"The Health Department implemented *Mega Negeri Sabah* gotong-royong activities on June 25,

and 30 small-scale gotong-royong initiatives were also carried out in all districts statewide," he said in his reply to Hiew Yun Zin (Warisan-Karamunting) on the government's efforts to curb dengue cases.

Shahelmei said inspections of mosquito breeding grounds and enforcement operations had been carried out, with 192,967 premises inspected.

A total of 567 fines were issued

under the Destruction of Disease-Bearing Insects Act 1975 (Act 154) to owners of premises where mosquito breeding grounds were found in their compounds.

"Fogging was carried out at 83,654 premises and integrated enforcement operations were also implemented in high-risk areas.

"The department is very concerned about the recent increase in dengue cases," he said. - Bernama

Covid-19 cases showing upward trend

KUALA LUMPUR: The number of new Covid-19 cases recorded in the 28th epidemiological week (EW28/2022) from July 10 to 16 has increased by 23.4% to 26,355, compared with 21,355 reported in EW27/2022.

Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said local Covid cases in EW28 also jumped by 23.4% to 26,317 cases, from 21,325 reported the previous week, while imported cases increased by 26.6% to 38 cases, compared with 30 recorded the previous week.

Noor Hisham said the number of deaths in EW28 also showed an increase of 2.6% (38 to 39 cases), while the average daily active cases for EW28 was 38,110, which was an increase of 18.6% compared with the previous week.

He said from Jan 25, 2020 (EW4/2020) to July 16, 2022 (EW28) cumulative new cases nationwide was at 4,619,045, cumulative recoveries at 4,540,717 and cumulative deaths at 35,848, while cumulative clusters were at 7,026, with 12 of them active.

- Bernama

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 9
RUANGAN : SPEAK UP

Vote yes for generation smoking ban

COMMENT

by Azrul Mohd Khalib

THE issues of smoking, vape and nicotine addiction in Malaysia have not seen much progress over the past decade. The country's smoking prevalence is currently at 21.3%. Forty five percent of men across all age groups smoke. Women smokers hover around 1%. About 17.4% of children aged 13 to 15 will be smokers, and one in 10 of those aged younger than 12 have lit up a cigarette.

For every RM1 collected from tax imposed on tobacco, RM4 is spent on treating those suffering from smoking-related diseases. Unfortunately, an estimated 27,000 people each year prematurely lose their lives due to these conditions.

According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019, 1.12 million people in this country are using e-cigarettes. An industry survey indicated that around 68% of male respondents vaped, compared with 32% of women. At least 600,000 children between the ages of 11 and 18 have taken up vaping. The numbers of new vape users who are becoming addicted to nicotine, many of whom have never smoked cigarettes, are increasing and starting younger each year.

Despite the known and growing threat of nicotine addiction, Malaysians and their elected representatives have been lulled into giving up and thinking that nothing more can or should be done when it comes to cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

On 14 April 1994, the heads of the largest American tobacco companies were subpoenaed to appear before the US Congress. Seven chief executive officers and presidents refused to admit that they knew cigarettes were addictive, and emphatically stated that they did not believe nicotine was addictive. Today, we know differently.

A similar scene has been playing out recently in Malaysia. Top executives and representatives of both the tobacco and vape industries and businesses have publicly claimed that they support a smoke-free world but oppose and disagree that a generational ban on cigarettes and e-cigarettes would be effective or necessary.

They now say that smoking is addictive, but vaping is not; that breathing in burnt tobacco fumes is harmful but inhaling nicotine in a vapour is safe.

As the tobacco industry begins to increase its presence in the e-cigarette market, it will soon be hard to differentiate between those selling cigarettes and those selling vape.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin will be tabling the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill in the Dewan Rakyat for debate and to be voted on by members of Parliament. It has taken 12 years to get to this point.

What is being proposed is not only bold and far reaching, but also contains world leading measures such as a generational ban on cigarettes and vape.

This is a piece of legislation that if implemented properly and effectively, will help save the lives of thousands of Malaysians each year. It will make a serious dent in smoking prevalence and regulate vape, which has gone out of control.

This Bill has captured the interest and concern of people and governments in this region and made news around the world. For once, Malaysia is making international headlines for the right reasons. But there is tremendous opposition and pushback to the proposals. Most naturally come from industry stakeholders, business owners, smokers and vapers. But some worries have also come from members of Parliament, reflecting their own individual concerns as well as those of their constituents.

Slippery slope and personal choice

A common strategy used by the tobacco and vape industry to oppose and undermine control measures is the "slippery slope" or unintended consequences argument. It suggests that a policy such as the generational ban would set a troubling precedent that would then be applied to other products such as sugar, fast food, butter and even alcoholic beverages. The argument is intended to create fear and hesitation among policymakers.



Flashback of frontpage of theSun, July 12.

But tobacco is a unique product. It cannot be treated similarly or compared to sugar or alcohol. When used properly as intended, it is a fact that smoking will kill half of its consumers.

The impact of vaping is still not fully understood. However, what is known is that increasingly more people, especially younger users, are coming down with e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury (EVALI) due to long term use and adulteration of liquids being heated and inhaled.

Alleged infringement of personal choice and freedoms, and terms such as "nanny state" are also used as part of the "slippery slope" argument. The claim is that smoking and vaping are adult choices, and do not justify state intervention. However, this ignores the long-known fact that most people start smoking when they are adolescents and teenagers.

Vaping, which is supposedly intended for and limited to adults trying to quit smoking, and who are addressing their nicotine addiction, is now being taken up by primary and secondary school children, as well as university students in Malaysia.

As long as vape remains unrestricted and unregulated, the journey to nicotine addiction begins in individuals as young as 10 years old. The same argument of personal liberty is used to imply that a person can start or quit when they no longer wish to smoke or vape. The reality is quite different. Quitting is hard. It takes smokers at least 30 attempts, and relapse rates are high.

The increasing presence of vape users at myQuit or smoking cessation clinics speak volumes of a new group of people wanting to be treated for nicotine addiction.

Loss of revenue

A straw man argument is being promoted by those who oppose the upcoming Bill. The claim is that the generational ban aims to completely ban cigarettes and vape for everyone beginning from 2023. This is untrue and is deliberately misleading to create fear, distract from the merits of the proposal and raise unreasonable opposition.

What is being proposed is a prohibition against the sale and use of cigarettes and vape by those born from 2005 onwards, beginning with those turning 18 next year. For everyone else, they will be able to continue buying and selling their products at retail outlets, and smoking and vaping in permitted locations. For them, nothing will change.

Will businesses which depend on the sales of tobacco products and vape be affected and lose money? Yes. It is likely that as older customers change habits, quit or die over the years, they

will not be replaced by new people who are addicted to nicotine.

In time, businesses such as retail outlets, pubs and restaurants adopting smoke-free and vape-free policies will adapt and thrive as they have in the UK and Europe.

Illicit market

Much of the data surrounding the illicit tobacco market originates from industry-funded research. The tobacco, and now vape, industries routinely use the findings from these commissioned reports to argue and conclude that every control policy, without exception, will lead to increases in smuggling and growth of illicit products.

Though the black market in illicit tobacco and vape does exist in Malaysia, these reports when compared with independent sources, consistently overestimate the availability and scale of the problem. This inadvertently results in policymakers and law enforcement becoming worried and hesitant in adopting policies such as this upcoming Bill, which the industry players claim could allegedly exacerbate the situation.

The industries argue that they are the victims of the illicit market, emphasising the role of counterfeit cigarettes and vape devices, which escape taxation and regulation.

However, they have never stopped benefiting from the illicit market. Recent studies found that around two-thirds of illicit cigarettes worldwide came from tobacco companies. Fewer than one in 10 were actual counterfeit products.

Is there a black market in illicit tobacco and vape products? Yes. Is its existence due to strict and harsh regulations? Not likely.

An illicit market will, nevertheless, emerge when regulations fall behind and enforcement is inadequate. Do we need to invest in better regulatory measures and improved enforcement? Absolutely.

Harm reduction

Malaysia has grown to be the largest vaping market in the Southeast Asian region. The vape industry is estimated to be worth RM2.3 billion, with 330 manufacturers and importers and 3,000 retail shops, employing around 15,000 people.

The industry has touted heat-not-burn tobacco products and vape as allegedly safer alternatives to cigarettes, and as a less harmful approach to smoking. It is also claimed that vaping can be a means to quit smoking. Instead, what is happening is the introduction of new nicotine delivery devices with high nicotine levels, which are unregulated, unrestricted and available to all.

Around 16mg per ml of nicotine works out to approximately 1.6% nicotine. Most cigarettes contain between 1mg and 3mg of nicotine. However, in Malaysia, vape liquids in disposables can be found to have between 1%, 3% and 5% strengths.

In the UK and Europe, the maximum strength permitted is 20mg, or 2%. The lethal dose of nicotine for adults is about 60mg or 6%. Disposables available in the Malaysian market range from 200 - 1,600 puffs, with different nicotine strengths. They are priced as low as RM10. With prices lower and nicotine content higher than a pack of cigarettes, it is not surprising that 4.9% of the Malaysian population are now estimated to be vaping.

However, the problem of nicotine addiction is now on the brink of escalating beyond anything previously seen. The vape retail business now counts users who have never smoked cigarettes, young women turned off by cigarettes as distasteful and disgusting, teenagers and even children as new customers. Indeed, there have been stories of people for whom vaping has been successful in helping them quit smoking cigarettes.

But there are worryingly more people coming forward as nicotine addicts, desperate yet unable to quit vaping, and those who are also continuing to smoke cigarettes, becoming dual users. Both smokers and vapers are now actively accessing nicotine replacement therapies such as nicotine patches and gum instead, for help with their addiction.

Many of us still remember the days when smoking was permitted on flights, and a time when television advertising of cigarettes was everywhere and invasive that we can still remember the jingles, songs and slogans decades later.

Sponsorship of certain sports of interest to youth were synonymous with tobacco brands. Music festivals, concerts and other lifestyle events were sponsored by the industry. Through these entry points, smoking was sold to young people as being cool, glamorous, sexy and sophisticated. Due to Malaysia's commitment to the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), all this was gradually removed.

Today, because it is unregulated and unrestricted, the vape industry is currently doing what has been prohibited for tobacco companies under the FCTC: Vape has now replaced cigarettes in public promotions, advertising and sponsorships.

Vape needs to be regulated as strictly as tobacco, and imposed with appropriate taxes. Public health measures are often not popular or may even be controversial when introduced, especially if they are perceived to be taking away liberties, lack compassion and intolerance, or simply being imposed upon.

Examples include gun control which have reduced gun deaths, seat belt laws which brought down road fatalities and injuries in accidents, and most recently, mask mandates that slashed new cases, hospital admissions and deaths during the Covid-19 pandemic.

One day, we will look back at the harm and suffering caused by smoking and vaping, the lives lost prematurely, the billions spent, and wonder why it has taken us decades to act. But to get to that point, we need to be bold, think out of the box and try something that will make a difference.

We need a dramatic shift in the environment to normalise smoking and vaping, to reduce the appeal and make such products less accessible. It cannot be business-as-usual. If not now, when? Who should we depend on to make the tough decisions concerning tobacco and vape? Should we just kick the problem down the road for other parliamentarians, or another government to solve?

Implementing the generational ban would lock the gate against new smokers and vapers. There are few times in our lifetime when we are called upon to step up and do the right thing. This is one of those times. During the upcoming debate on the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, I ask that our members of Parliament be on the right side of history and vote yes in support of building a better, healthier future for everyone in Malaysia.

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