

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 14

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19



Khairy (tengah) ketika hadir pada Program Khidmat Komuniti Anjuran Persatuan Pembantu Perubatan Malaysia di Senawang, semalam.
(Foto Azrul Edham Mohd Aminuddin/BH)

KKM rayu ibu bapa segera vaksin anak

Kadar kemasukan kanak-kanak ke Unit Rawatan Rapi Pediatrik meningkat

Oleh Mohd Amin Jali
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Seremban: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) merayu ibu bapa atau penjaga agar segera mendapatkan vaksinasi untuk anak masing-masing, susulan kadar kemasukan golongan itu ke Unit Rawatan Rapi Pediatrik (PICU) akibat COVID-19 meningkat sejak Februari lalu.

Menterinya, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar, berkata secara purata setakat ini kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun di seluruh negara yang sudah divaksin sedar 32 peratus, manakala di Negeri Sembilan mencapai 35 peratus.

Katanya, pihaknya bimbang dengan peratusan yang rendah itu ketika kes COVID-19 memabihkan kanak-kanak terus meningkat.

"Yang merisaukan saya adalah peratusan kanak-kanak yang masuk di ICU. Sebab itu, saya merayu ibu bapa gunakan tempoh cuti sekolah seminggu lagi segera dapatkan vaksin kerana setakat ini hanya 32 peratus sahaja kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun yang menerima vaksin di seluruh negara.

"Ya, vaksin ini tidak dapat mencegah sangat jangkitan, tetapi penting untuk melindungi anak kita atau diri kita daripada kesan gejala buruk seperti masuk ke hospital, sesak nafas sehingga terpaksa menggunakan alat bantuan pernafasan atau meninggal dunia.

"Jadi, saya berharap kita dapat mencapai 50 peratus (kadar vaksinasi kanak-kanak) sebelum sekolah bermula, biar pun agak sukar sebab keengganan itu masih lagi ada, tetapi dilihat ada sedikit peningkatan dalam kalangan ibu bapa," katanya selepas merasmikan Program Khidmat Komuniti anjuran Persatuan Pembantu Perubatan Malaysia (PPPM) sempena sambutan Hari Pembantu Perubatan 2022 di pekanarangan Pasaraya Mydin Senawang, di sini, semalam.

Yang turut hadir, Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Sembilan (JKNS), Datuk Dr Harlina Abdul Rashid dan Presiden PPPM, Mustafa Abd Majid.

Sebelum ini, KKM mendedahkan, sejak bulan lalu hingga kini, kadar kemasukan pesakit COVID-19 dalam kalangan kanak-kanak meningkat sebanyak 94 peratus untuk semua Kategori 3 hingga 5, dengan peningkatan ketara bagi Kategori 4 iaitu sebanyak 200 peratus, diikuti Kategori 5 sebanyak 125 peratus.

Kenyataan itu menyebut kanak-kanak menjadi golongan lebih berisiko mendapat jangkitan COVID-19 memandangkan mereka yang berusia 11 tahun dan ke bawah belum mendapat perlindungan sewajarnya, berbanding

kumpulan umur yang lebih tinggi yang sudah mendapat vaksinasi.

Mengulas lanjut, Khairy berkata, kes kesan sampingan kanak-kanak yang divaksin sangat kecil berbanding dewasa.

Beliau yang juga Ahli Parlimen Rembau, menegaskan yang kanak-kanak hanya diberikan 1/3 daripada dos untuk orang dewasa.

"Anak saya, anak kenalan saya yang ambil vaksinasi tidak mengalami apa-apa kesan sampingan yang serius, mungkin terasa sakit sedikit di lengan sahaja," katanya.

Mengenai kemungkinan varian baharu COVID-19, dikenali sebagai 'Deltacron' mula menular di beberapa bahagian Eropah, beliau berkata, pihaknya sentiasa memantau dan membuat kajian melalui Institut Penyelidikan Malaysia serta Kementerian Sains, Teknologi dan Inovasi (MOSTI) dan Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi (KPT).

Menurut beliau, langkah sepatutnya akan diambil sekiranya dapat mengesan varian baharu yang lebih menganas.

"Sebab itu saya nyatakan peralihan kita ke peringkat endemik ini sekiranya tiada varian baharu yang muncul, tetapi sekiranya ada dan lebih menganas, maka mungkin sekatan akan kembali.

"Tapi setakat ini, belum lagi ada apa-apa maklumat yang menunjukkan varian baharu ini berleluasa dan mempunyai risiko yang tinggi kepada kesihatan kita. Kita (KKM) sentiasa pantau," katanya.

Tingkat kempen, meriahkan PPV

Kuala Lumpur: Kerajaan disyor menggiatkan kempen meningkatkan kesedaran ibu bapa serta memeriahkan Pusat Pemberian Vaksin (PPV) kanak-kanak di seluruh negara bagi menggalakkan lebih ramai individu usia lima hingga 11 tahun mendapatkan pelatikan melindungi diri daripada jangkitan COVID-19 itu.

Bagi Erdie Ab Wahid, 36, dia mengakui kerajaan telah melakukan usaha sebaik mungkin sejak bermula Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kanak-kanak (PICKids) pada 3 Februari lalu dan ia dilihat memberi kesedaran kepadanya mendapatkan vaksin untuk anak sulung berusia 11 tahun.

Katanya yang bekerja sendiri, kesedaran ibu bapa penting bagi mengelakkan lebih ramai kanak-kanak terpaksa dimasukkan ke Unit Rawatan Rapi Pediatrik (PICU) akibat COVID-19 dengan kadar kemasukan juga dilaporkan meningkat sejak Februari lalu.

"Saya memahami pengambilan vaksin kanak-kanak tidak boleh secara paksaan. Apa yang penting ketika ini adalah kesedaran ibu bapa sendiri mendapatkan maklumat sahih mengenai kepentingan vaksin untuk kanak-kanak bagi mengurangkan kadar jangkitan sehingga dimasukkan ke PICU," katanya.

Kelmarin, Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) memaklumkan,

sejak Februari hingga kini, kadar kemasukan pesakit kanak-kanak meningkat sebanyak 94 peratus untuk semua kategori 3 hingga 5, dengan peningkatan ketara bagi kategori 4, iaitu sebanyak 200 peratus, diikuti kategori 5 sebanyak 125 peratus.

Menurut KKM, kanak-kanak menjadi golongan yang lebih berisiko mendapat jangkitan COVID-19 memandangkan mereka yang berusia 11 tahun dan ke bawah belum mendapat perlindungan sewajarnya berbanding kumpulan umur yang lebih tinggi yang sudah mendapat vaksinasi.

Kakitangan swasta, Fairuz Karmila Ahmad, 34, berkata kerajaan mungkin boleh menggiatkan program pelatikan secara bergerak di kawasan luar bandar dan pedalaman, menggunakan unsur-unsur menarik bersama pakar perubatan yang boleh mendidik ibu bapa agar mendapatkan vaksin untuk anak masing-masing.

"Melalui kerjasama ketua kampung, kemungkinan usaha ini dapat meningkatkan kesedaran ibu bapa mendapatkan vaksin untuk anak-anak selain mengurangkan kadar jangkitan COVID-19 dalam kalangan kanak-kanak. PPV bergerak juga boleh dilaksanakan di bandar walaupun kita mempunyai PPV di kompleks beli-belah atau pusat kesihatan," katanya.

26,250 jangkitan baharu

Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) melaporkan 26,250 kes positif baharu COVID-19 setakat tengah malam kelmarin, menjadikan keseluruhan 3,801,036 kes setakat ini sejak ia mula dikesan pada 25 Januari 2020.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata 25,089 kes sembah turut dilaporkan kelmarin, menjadikan 3,443,532 kes kumulatif sudah pulih daripada jangkitan atau 90.6 peratus daripada keseluruhan kes dilaporkan setakat ini.

Beliau berkata, sebanyak 25,705 kes adalah penularan tempatan dengan 24,878 warganegara (96.8 peratus) dan 827 bukan warganegara (3.2 peratus) manakala 545 kes import memabihkan 509 rakyat Malaysia dan 36 warga asing.

Katanya, sebanyak 387 kes memerlukan rawatan di Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) iaitu 169 kes disahkan COVID-19 dan 198

kes disyaki, kemungkinan, dan kes dalam siasatan; dan 211 kes memerlukan bantuan pernafasan iaitu 100 kes disahkan COVID-19 dan 111 kes disyaki, kemungkinan, dan kes dalam siasatan.

"Daripada 26,250 kes harian yang dilaporkan semalam, sebanyak 8,652 kes (32.96 peratus) dalam Kategori 1; Kategori 2 mencatat 17,421 kes (66.37 peratus); Kategori 3 (70 kes atau 0.26 peratus); Kategori 4 (60 kes atau 0.23 peratus); dan 47 kes atau 0.18 peratus Kategori 5.

"Daripada 177 kes COVID-19 kategori 3, 4, dan 5 yang baharu dilaporkan pada semalam, sebanyak 43 kes (24.29 peratus) tidak divaksinasi atau belum lengkap divaksinasi; 91 kes (51.41 peratus) sudah menerima dua dos vaksin COVID-19 tetapi belum menerima dos penggalak; dan 43 kes (24.29 peratus) sudah menerima dos penggalak," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : COVID-19

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Putrajaya

Jangkitan Covid-19 dalam kalangan warga emas di negara ini mencatatkan hampir 10 peratus daripada 3,711,199 kes positif yang direkodkan dari 19 Mac 2020 hingga 9 Mac lalu.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, sepanjang tempoh itu, Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) merekodkan 367,522 kes atau 9.9 peratus daripada keseluruhan kes membabitkan kumpulan berkenaan.

Menurutnya, sebanyak 19,250 (57.4 peratus) kematian akibat Covid-19 yang dilaporkan adalah dalam kalangan warga emas.

"Berbanding dengan kumpulan usia yang lebih muda iaitu kurang 60 tahun, jumlah dan kadar kematian dalam kalangan warga emas berusia 60 tahun serta ke atas adalah lebih tinggi," katanya dalam satu kenyataan media, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, warga emas adalah golongan yang paling terkesan dan berisiko tinggi untuk mendapat jangkitan Covid-19 dengan komplikasi teruk akibat jangkitan itu.

Beliau berkata, ia berikutan daya tahan tubuh yang rendah, penyakit kronik dihadapi oleh warga emas dan proses penyembuhan serta pemulihan daripada jangkitan Covid-19 juga lebih perlahan dan rumit.

Pada masa sama, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, warga emas yang berada di pusat jagaan juga terdedah dengan risiko jangkitan Covid-19 yang berkemungkinan menjadi tidak terkawal jika penghuni dan penjaga tidak mengikut prosedur operasi

JANGKITAN COVID-19 DALAM KALANGAN WARGA EMAS

9.9% daripada kes positif



SEORANG kanak-kanak menerima vaksin melalui Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-Kanak (PICKids) di Putrajaya. Gambar NSTP/MOHID FADLI HAMZAH



la berikutan daya tahan tubuh yang rendah, penyakit kronik dihadapi oleh warga emas dan proses penyembuhan serta pemulihan daripada jangkitan Covid-19 juga lebih perlahan dan rumit"

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

standard (SOP).

Katanya, mereka yang berada di pusat jagaan lebih berisiko tinggi mendapat jangkitan dan kematian akibat Covid-19 berbanding warga emas dalam komuniti.

"Penularan jangkitan Covid-19 dalam pusat jagaan warga emas lebih mudah dan cepat kerana jumlah penghuni ramai mengakibatkan kesukaran amalan penjarakan fizikal," katanya.

Tambahnya, data antarabangsa pada 2020 melaporkan 47 peratus kematian adalah dalam kalangan warga emas yang tinggal di institusi berkediaman.

Katanya, KKM merekodkan sebanyak 154 (39.6 peratus) kluster Covid-19 di pusat jagaan warga emas antara 25 Januari 2020 sehingga 3 Mac lalu.

"Kluster itu adalah penyumbang tertinggi berbanding kluster-kluster kumpulan berisiko lain seperti kluster di pusat jagaan kanak-kanak dan pusat dialisis," katanya.

Angka kematian naik 33%

Putrajaya: Malaysia merekodkan sebanyak 77 lagi kes kematian akibat Covid-19 kelmarin, menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan mangsa yang maut akibat wabak itu mencecah 33,720 kes.

Data laman sesawang CovidNow menunjukkan 23 daripadanya adalah membabitkan kes kematian di luar fasiliti kesihatan (BID), menjadikan jumlah kematian kategori itu kini sebanyak 7,018.

Pulau Pinang mencatatkan bilangan kes tertinggi dengan 12 kematian akibat Covid-19 termasuk tiga kes BID. Ia disusuli Kelantan dan Selangor dengan masing-masing sebanyak 11 kematian.

Sebanyak 10 daripada ke-

matian akibat Covid-19 di Kelantan adalah kes BID manakala tiga kes kategori berkenaan dilaporkan di Selangor.

Kedah melaporkan sembilan kematian akibat Covid-19; lapan kematian di Johor; Perak (tujuh dengan dua kes BID); empat kematian masing-masing dilaporkan di Perlis dan Terengganu (termasuk satu kes BID); masing-masing tiga kematian di Negeri Sembilan (dengan satu kes BID) dan Kuala Lumpur (termasuk satu kes BID); dua kes kematian di Sabah, kedua-dua kes BID dan masing-masing satu kematian di Melaka, Pahang dan Sarawak.

Secara keseluruhannya,

Malaysia menunjukkan trend peningkatan kes kematian akibat Covid-19 iaitu sebanyak 33 peratus dalam tempoh 14 hari lalu.

Hampir kesemua negeri mencatatkan peningkatan kecuali Sabah yang mencatatkan penurunan sebanyak 24 peratus dalam tempoh dua minggu manakala Labuan pada kadar sifar.

Tiga negeri dan Wilayah Persekutuan mencatatkan peningkatan lebih 100 peratus bagi kes kematian akibat Covid-19, dengan Putrajaya mencatatkan peningkatan sebanyak 400 peratus.

Ia disusuli Perlis pada kadar 300 peratus dan Negeri Sembilan dengan pertambahan sebanyak 138 peratus.

15,259,493 terima dos penggalak

Kuala Lumpur: Seramai 15,259,493 individu dewasa atau 64.9 peratus daripada populasi kumpulan itu di negara ini sudah menerima dos penggalak Covid-19 setakat kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data menerusi laman web COVID-NOW, sejumlah 22,934,341 atau 97.5 peratus daripada populasi sama sudah melengkapkan vaksinasi mereka manakala 23,210,853 atau 98.7 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun, sebanyak 1,144,379 individu atau 32.2 peratus kumpulan itu sudah menerima dos pertama vaksin

Covid-19 melalui Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-Kanak (PICKids).

Bagi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun pula, sebanyak 2,836,325 individu atau 91.2 peratus daripada populasi itu telah melengkapkan vaksinasi mereka manakala 2,936,489 atau 94.4 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Vaksinasi harian kelmarin menyaksikan sebanyak 46,688 dos vaksin diberikan membabitkan 25,471 dos pertama, 1,047 dos kedua dan 20,170 dos penggalak, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif dos vaksin yang diberikan di bawah Program Imu-

nisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) adalah sebanyak 68,113,082.

Sementara itu, menurut portal GitHub Kementerian Kesihatan, sebanyak 77 kes kematian akibat Covid-19 direkodkan kelmarin dengan Pulau Pinang tertinggi iaitu 12 kes, diikuti Selangor dan Kelantan masing-masing dengan 11 kes.

Kedah pula merekodkan sembilan kes, Johor (lapan), Perak (tujuh), Perlis dan Terengganu masing-masing dengan empat kes, Negeri Sembilan dan Kuala Lumpur masing-masing dengan tiga kes, Sabah (dua) serta Sarawak, Pahang dan Melaka masing-masing dengan satu kes.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 7
RUANGAN : COVID-19

Hanya 32% kanak-kanak sudah divaksin

Seremban: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) merayu supaya ibu bapa mendapatkan segera vaksinasi untuk kanak-kanak susulan kadar kemasukan golongan itu ke Unit Rawatan Rapi Pediatrik (Picu) akibat Covid-19 meningkat sejak Februari.

Menterinya, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar berkata, setakat ini kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun di seluruh negara yang sudah divaksin hanya 32 peratus manakala di Negeri Sembilan mencapai 35 peratus.

Katanya, pihaknya bimbang peratusan rendah itu ketika kes Covid-19 membabitkan kanak-kanak terus meningkat.

"Yang merisaukan saya adalah peratusan kanak-kanak yang masuk di ICU. Sebab itu, saya merayu ibu bapa gunakan tempoh cuti sekolah seminggu lagi untuk segera dapatkan vaksin kerana setakat ini hanya 32 peratus saja kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun telah menerima vaksin di seluruh negara.

"Ya, vaksin ini tidak dapat mencegah sangat jangkitan, tetapi penting untuk melindungi anak kita atau diri kita daripada

kesan gejala buruk seperti masuk ke hospital, sesak nafas sehingga terpaksa menggunakan alat bantuan pernafasan atau meninggal dunia.

"Saya berharap kita mencapai 50 peratus (kadar vaksinasi kanak-kanak) sebelum sekolah bermula, biarpun agak sukar sebab keengganan itu masih ada, tetapi ada sedikit peningkatan dalam kalangan ibu bapa," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang media selepas merasmikan Program Khidmat Komuniti anjuran Persatuan Pembantu Perubatan Malaysia (PPPM) Sempena Sambutan Hari Pembantu Perubatan 2022 di perkarangan Pasaraya Mydin Senawang di sini, semalam.

Mengulas lanjut, Khairy berkata, kes kesan sampingan kanak-kanak yang divaksin sangat kecil dan jauh berbanding dewasa.

Beliau yang juga Ahli Parlimen Rembau, berkata kanak-kanak hanya mengambil satu pertiga dos daripada orang dewasa.

"Anak saya, anak kenalan saya ambil tidak mengalami apa-apa kesan sampingan serius, mungkin terasa sakit sedikit di lengan saja," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 19

RUANGAN : LOKAL

Seremban: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) merancang menetapkan satu bulan sebagai Bulan Pemeriksaan Kesihatan Malaysia (BPKM) dengan cadangan awal diadakan pada Julai depan.

Menterinya, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar berkata, ia adalah lanjutan daripada program Skim Peduli Kesihatan untuk Kum-pulan B40 (PeKa B40) ke-menterian itu membabitkan golongan B40 yang sedang berjalan.

Katanya, setakat ini program berkenaan sudah menyaring 561,000 individu di seluruh negara, bagaimanapun mereka yang layak mendapat saringan itu sebenarnya hampir lima juta orang.

"Kita lihat ramai tidak

KKM rancang lancar BPKM selama sebulan

dapat memanfaatkan program disediakan secara percuma kepada penerima bantuan sara hidup kerajaan yang berusia 40 tahun ke atas membabitkan ketua keluarga dan pasangan.

"Mereka boleh daftar di Protect Health Malaysia (PHM) di bawah KKM. Saya risau ramai yang tak buat (pemeriksaan saringan kesihatan).

"Oleh itu, kita merancang untuk menetapkan satu bulan tahun ini dikhususkan untuk melaksanakan program ini. Kita akan gerakan

bukan sahaja aset KKM, tetapi juga pengamal perubatan di bawah Peka B40 untuk turun di lapangan di kampung atau di pedalaman buat saringan kesihatan," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang media selepas merasmikan Program Khidmat Komuniti anjuran Persatuan Pembantu Perubatan Malaysia (PPPM) Sempena Sambutan Hari Pembantu Perubatan 2022 di pekarangan Pasaraya Mydin Senawang di sini, semalam.



KHAIRY (kanan) bersama dengan penolong pegawai perubatan pada Program Khidmat Komuniti sempena Hari Pembantu Perubatan 2022 di ruang legar Pasaraya Mydin Senawang, semalam.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 12
RUANGAN : NEGARA

Risiko alami komplikasi teruk jika dijangkiti Covid-19

57 peratus kematian babit warga emas

Oleh SITI A'ISYAH SUKAIMI

PUTRAJAYA – Sebanyak 367,522 atau 9.9 peratus daripada 3,711,199 kes jangkitan Covid-19 yang dilaporkan di negara ini sejak 19 Mac 2020 hingga 9 Mac lalu adalah membabitkan golongan warga emas.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, dalam masa sama, sebanyak 19,250 atau 57.4 peratus kematian yang dilaporkan dalam tempoh tersebut adalah dalam kalangan golongan berkenaan.

Menurut beliau, berbanding mereka berusia kurang 60 tahun, jumlah dan kadar kematian dalam kalangan warga emas berusia 60 tahun dan ke atas adalah lebih tinggi.

"Warga emas merupakan golongan yang paling terkesan dan berisiko tinggi untuk mendapat jangkitan Covid-19 dengan komplikasi teruk disebabkan jangkitan tersebut.

"Ini adalah kerana daya tahan tubuh yang rendah, penyakit kronik yang dihidapi dan proses penyembuhan serta pemulihan jangkitan Covid-19 yang lebih perlahan dan rumit," katanya dalam satu kenyataan di sini semalam.

Dr. Noor Hisham memberitahu, kadar kematian warga emas juga lebih tinggi berbanding kumpulan umur lain.

Sejak 25 Januari 2020 hingga 3 Mac lalu, sebanyak 154 atau 39.6 peratus kluster di pusat jagaan warga emas telah dilaporkan dan



WARGA emas dinasihatkan supaya mengambil suntikan vaksin covid-19 bagi melindungi dan mengelak komplikasi lebih teruk.

menjadi penyumbang tertinggi berbanding kluster kumpulan berisiko lain seperti kluster di pusat jagaan kanak-kanak, pusat dialisis dan sebagainya.

"Warga emas yang berada di pusat jagaan juga terdedah kepada risiko dijangkiti Covid-19 yang mana jangkitan mungkin menjadi tidak terkawal jika penghuni dan penjaga tidak mengikut prosedur operasi standard (SOP) termasuk penjarakan fizikal.

"Golongan ini lebih berisiko tinggi untuk mendapat jangkitan dan kematian akibat Covid-19 berbanding warga emas dalam

komuniti," katanya.

Setakat 9 Mac lalu, sebanyak 3,355,784 atau 91.9 peratus warga emas telah melengkapkan dos primer vaksin Covid-19, manakala 2,472,576 atau 73.6 peratus pula mengambil dos penggalak setakat Oktober lalu.

Sehubungan itu, katanya, Kementerian Kesihatan menyeru semua warga emas yang berkelayakan, namun belum menerima vaksin sama ada dos primer atau dos penggalak supaya segera mendapatkannya di pusat pemberian vaksin (PPV) yang terdekat secara walk-in.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : PASCA PRN JOHOR

Beri peluang kesihatan awam stabil sebelum PRU diadakan- KJ

SEREMBAN - Keadaan kesihatan awam perlu stabil sebelum Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-15 (PRU-15) diadakan dalam tempoh terdekat ini.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin berkata, walaupun negara telah masuk ke fasa peralihan endemik tidak bermaksud pandemik sudah tamat, semua pihak masih perlu berhati-hati.

"Sempadan negara dibuka, saf (solat jemaah) boleh dirapatkan, had maksimum kapasiti dimansuhkan tetapi itu

bukan bermaksud kita boleh buat apa sahaja dan kita tahu kalau kita buat PRU ia adalah satu aktiviti melibatkan orang ramai.

"Kita baru selesai di Pilihan Raya Negeri (PRN) Johor, saya lebih suka tunggu sehingga keadaan kesihatan awam kita stabil barulah kita boleh melihat akan PRU," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian dalam sidang akhbar selepas selesai Program Khidmat Komuniti sempena sambutan

Hari Pembantu Perubatan di Senawang pada Ahad.

Dalam pada itu Khairy memberitahu Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) akan mengadakan perbincangan dengan Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya (SPR) bagi mencari mekanisme terbaik membolehkan pesakit Covid-19 mengundi dalam pilihan raya.

Beliau berkata, perkara tersebut perlu dibincangkan tanpa menafikan hak pengundi yang telah dijangkiti selain tidak memudaratkan individu lain.

"Ya, memang hak mereka untuk mengundi tetapi satu lagi ialah hak rakyat untuk tidak dijangkiti dan tidak memudaratkan kesihatan mereka. Bagi mengimbangi hak ini, kita kena cari apakah kaedah yang terbaik."

"Memang ada banyak cara cuma saya bangkitkan cabaran yang kami hadapi, kalau mahu buat boleh, mungkin kita perlu duduk berbincang dengan SPR. Kalau dipanggil Pilihan Raya Umum (PRU) pun, akan ada orang positif Covid-19" ujarnya.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 19

RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT

26,250 kes baharu Covid-19 pada Sabtu

SHAH ALAM - Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) merekodkan 26,250 kes baharu Covid-19 pada Sabtu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes adalah sebanyak 3,443,532.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, jumlah berkenaan melibatkan 25,705 kes tempatan dan 545 kes import.

Menurutnya, daripada jumlah itu, sebanyak 26,073 kes yang dilaporkan atau 99.33 peratus terdiri daripada kategori satu dan dua iaitu tidak mempunyai gejala serta bergejala ringan, manakala sebanyak 177 kes atau 0.67 peratus adalah kategori tiga, empat dan lima.

"Bagi pecahan daripada jumlah tersebut, sebanyak 8,652 kes atau 32.96 peratus adalah daripada pesakit Covid-19 kategori satu, sementara 17,421 kes atau 66.37 peratus adalah pesakit kategori dua.

"Bagi kategori tiga, terdapat 70 kes (0.26 peratus), kategori empat dengan 60 kes (0.23 peratus) dan bagi kategori lima adalah sebanyak 47 kes (0.18 pe-

ratus)," katanya dalam kenyataan pada Ahad.

Mengulas lanjut, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, berdasarkan jumlah keseluruhan 177 kes bagi pesakit kategori tiga hingga lima, 43 kes dilaporkan tidak divaksinasi atau belum lengkap mendapatkan pelarian berkenaan.

"91 kes pula sudah menerima dua dos vaksin Covid-19 tetapi tidak menerima dos penggalak. Sebanyak 43 kes pula sudah menerima dos penggalak.

"Selain itu, 99 kes melibatkan mereka yang berumur 60 tahun ke atas, 77 kes lagi mempunyai komorbid dan dua melibatkan kes ibu mengandung.

Sementara itu, beliau berkata, sebanyak dua kluster baharu direkodkan pada Sabtu menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan kluster aktif sebanyak 395.

"Sebanyak 367 kes memerlukan rawatan di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) de-



DR NOOR HISHAM

ngan 169 daripadanya disahkan Covid-19, manakala kes disyaki, kemungkinan dan kes dalam siasatan pula adalah sebanyak 198," katanya.

Ujarnya, bagi kes memerlukan bantuan pernafasan pula, sebanyak 211 kes dilaporkan dengan 100 kes disahkan Covid-19 dan 111 lagi kes disyaki, kemungkinan dan kes dalam siasatan.

Dr Noor Hisham turut memaklumkan, negara merekodkan sebanyak 25,089 kes sembuh menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kepada 3,443,532 kes setakat ini.

Dalam masa sama, enanti negeri mencatatkan peratusan pengisian melebihi 50 peratus bagi katil kes-kritikal atau ICU dengan Putrajaya mendahului sebanyak 167 peratus, Kelantan (69 peratus), Johor (68 peratus), Kuala Lumpur (65 peratus), Selangor (58 peratus) dan Perak (53 peratus).

PICKids dijangka capai 50 peratus

KKM rayu ibu bapa segera vaksin anak sebelum sekolah dibuka

Oleh NORAFIDAH ASSAN

SEREMBAN

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) menjangkakan peratusan jumlah kanak-kanak yang divaksin menerusi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-kanak (PICKids) mencapai 50 peratus sebelum sekolah dibuka minggu depan.

Menterinya, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar berkata, ketika ini hanya 32 peratus kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 12 tahun menerima vaksin Covid-19, namun berlaku sedikit peningkatan.

"Jangan ambil sikap 'tunggu

dan lihat' sekolah akan dibuka seminggu lagi, jadi saya merayu kepada ibu bapa untuk segera mendapatkan suntikan vaksin Covid-19 untuk anak-anak sebagai langkah perlindungan.

"Tujuan vaksin adalah sebagai perlindungan daripada kesan gejala buruk Covid-19, mengelakkan menggunakan bantuan pernafasan dan meninggal dunia. Kesan sampingan untuk kanak-kanak jauh lebih rendah daripada orang dewasa," katanya pada sidang akhbar selepas Program Komuniti sempena Sambutan Hari Pembantu Perubatan 2022 di Pasar raya Mydin Senawang, di sini pada Ahad.

Pada Sabtu, KKM dalam hantaran melalui laman Facebook memaklumkan sejak Februari hingga kini, kadar memasukkan pesakit kanak-kanak meningkat sebanyak 94 peratus untuk semua kategori tiga hingga lima, dengan peningkatan ketara bagi kategori empat, iaitu se-



Khairy (kanan) pada sidang akhbar selepas Program Komuniti sempena Sambutan Hari Pembantu Perubatan 2022 di Pasar raya Mydin Senawang di Seremban pada Ahad.

banyak 200 peratus, diikuti kategori lima sebanyak 125 peratus.

Dalam perkembangan berlainan, Khairy berkata, lebih kurang lima juta rakyat Malaysia yang layak membuat pemeriksaan kesihatan secara percuma menerusi program Skim Peduli

Kesihatan Untuk Kumpulan B40 (PeKa B40) tidak memanfaatkan program tersebut.

"Di peringkat nasional setakat ini hanya 561,000 individu yang layak telah membuat saringan kesihatan sejak program PeKa B40 bermula Februari lalu.

"Jumlah yang layak membuat saringan adalah lebih lima juta orang, jadi kita lihat ramai yang tidak memanfaatkan program PeKa B40 ini walaupun ia percuma.

"Melalui PeKa B40, individu yang layak perlu datang ke klinik kesihatan. Mungkin ramai yang 'malas' datang ke klinik, oleh itu Kementerian berhasrat untuk turun ke lapangan termasuk kawasan kampung dan pedalaman," katanya.

Khairy berkata, program itu menyasarkan pemeriksaan kesihatan penyakit tidak berjangkit secara percuma kepada ketua keluarga dan pasangan daripada golongan berpendapatan rendah berusia 40 tahun ke atas yang juga penerima Bantuan Prihatin Rakyat (BPR).

Beliau berkata, berikutan sambutan yang kurang menggalakkan menerusi program PeKa B40, KKM berhasrat menjadikan bulan Julai sebagai bulan pemeriksaan kesihatan Malaysia.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : NATION / NEWS

INFECTIVITY RATE

NATIONAL RT DROPS BELOW 1.0

Sarawak records highest Rt at 1.29, followed by Kuala Lumpur at 1.14 and Terengganu at 1.13

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MALAYSIA is recording a low Covid-19 infectivity rate as it progresses to an endemic phase next month.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the national infectivity rate (Rt) was at 0.99 on Saturday — the first time it had dropped below 1.0 since Jan 18.

Dr Noor Hisham said Sarawak had the highest Rt at 1.29 on Saturday, followed by Kuala Lumpur at 1.14 and Terengganu at 1.13.

Four states with a Rt below 1.0 were Perlis at 0.99, followed by Kelantan at 0.97, Labuan at 0.80 and Sabah at 0.70.

The Rt in other states were between 1.0 and 1.07.

Dr Noor Hisham also said 99.33 per cent of the 26,250 new cases reported on Saturday were in Categories 1 and 2 while 177 were in Categories 3, 4 and 5.

Nevertheless, 1,868 Covid-19 patients were admitted to hospitals on the same day with 753 (40 per cent) of them in Categories 3, 4 and 5.

The intensive care unit (ICU) bed usage for Covid-19 patients in Putrajaya was at 167 per cent, Kelantan at 69 per cent, Johor at 68 per cent, Kuala Lumpur at 65 per cent, Selangor at 58 per cent and Perak at 53 per cent.

Dr Noor Hisham added that normal hospital bed use in Selangor had exceeded 100 per cent at 109 per cent.

On a related note, more than half of the country's Covid-19 fatalities involve senior citizens, as the Health Ministry recorded 19,250, or 57.4 per cent, of deaths involving the elderly between March 19, 2020, and March 9, 2022.

He added that about 10 per cent of the cases in the country comprised those aged 60 and above for the same period.

From Jan 25, 2020, to March 3 this year, 39.4 per cent of the high-risk group clusters were old



A senior citizen getting a Covid-19 booster shot in Bukit Jalil last month. FILE PIC

folk's home clusters, which was higher than other high-risk groups such as children care centres and dialysis centres.

However, up to last Wednesday, Dr Noor Hisham said 91.9 per cent of the senior citizen population, or 3,355,784 people, had completed two doses of the Covid-19 vaccines.

After the booster programme was rolled out on Oct 16 last year, 73.6 per cent of the senior citizens or 2,472,576 had received their shots.

He said up to Thursday, 100 per

cent of the 19,646 old folk's homes residents and 10,173 caretakers from both registered and unregistered institutions had received two doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

Meanwhile, the country reported another 77 Covid-19 deaths on Saturday, including 23 brought-in-dead cases, pushing the toll to 33,720.

Penang registered the highest daily deaths on Saturday, where 12 people died of Covid-19. It is followed by Selangor and Kelantan with 11 deaths each, nine in

Kedah, eight in Johor, seven in Perak, four each in Perlis and Terengganu, three each in Negri Sembilan and Kuala Lumpur, two in Sabah, and one each in Melaka, Pahang and Sarawak.

Twenty-six people in Malaysia died of Covid-19 per million population in the past two weeks. The current fatality rate is at 0.3 per cent.

On Covid-19 clusters, Dr Noor Hisham said two new ones were detected on Saturday, bringing the total to 6,875 nationwide, with 395 still active.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NEWS / NATION

VULNERABLE GROUP

'LET PAEDIATRICIANS VAX KIDS'

Expert: Parents more comfortable having someone they trust inoculate their children

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PAEDIATRICIANS in public and private facilities should be allowed to administer Covid-19 jabs to children.

This is because parents are more comfortable having their children vaccinated in a familiar environment by someone they know and trust.

An expert said paediatricians are also well-versed in communicating to parents the safety and importance of getting their children vaccinated against Covid-19.

This, he said, would help tackle vaccine hesitancy and boost the immunisation rate in a vulnerable group: children aged 5 to 11.

Consultant paediatrician and paediatric cardiologist Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail said the number of and accessibility to Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) offsite vaccination centres could be expanded.

"Many of my patients are requesting that their paediatricians give the vaccine to their kids."

"While we are willing to help, the Health Ministry wants the vaccine to be given at specific centres and clinics."

"The trust that we have built with our patients over the years or months can't be replaced," the Malaysian Paediatric Association

committee member told the *New Straits Times*.

The ministry, Dr Zulkifli said, had made it clear that the vaccine was available for free and the minister had given justifications for the vaccination, including data about Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) admissions.

Besides this, he said the authorities should engage more with influencers, as well as religious groups or people who had doubts about the vaccines and were transferring those doubts to their followers.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin had, on March 9, said the vaccination rate for kids below 11 was low.

The ministry had sent out 1.63 million vaccination appointments under PICKids, but only one million had turned up until Feb 3.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali had, on March 6, cited religious sentiments as a reason behind the low take-up in Kelantan and Terengganu.

The ministry's data said that in 2020, there were 7,730 infections among children and the figure rose to 379,245 last year.

From January to March this year, there had been over 123,000 infections among children.

On Saturday, the ministry said child admissions (zero to 12 years) to PICU wards due to Covid-19 infection had increased by 94 per cent for Categories 3 to 5, with a significant increase for Category 4 by 200 per cent and Category 5 by 125 per cent.

The ministry said it was important for children aged 5 to 11 to get vaccinated to protect them from severe infection and complications, namely Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, especially since the country



A child and his mother posing with cartoon mascots after receiving the Covid-19 vaccine at the Mawar Medical Centre in Seremban, Negri Sembilan, on Friday. (Inset) Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail. BERNAMA PIC

was about to transition to the endemic phase with eased restrictions.

Dr Zulkifli, who is also Immunise4Life Programme chairman, viewed this as a natural progression as more than 90 per cent of adults had been fully vaccinated and almost 70 per cent had received their booster shots, thus the vulnerable group remaining was children.

He said the new Covid variant had adapted itself to cause severe disease in kids.

"This was not true of the older variants. It's a combination of vulnerable unvaccinated individuals, kids in this case, and the evolution of the virus to survive and procreate."

He said the spike in cases among children was partially related to the low vaccination rates among the age group.

It was partly also due to the opening of schools, kinder-

gartens, daycare centres, nurseries and other facilities without proper and strict compliance with standard operating procedures, including ensuring air circulation, he added.

"Parents are given a choice to get their children vaccinated. The government has done all it can to make the vaccine available at great cost."

"The only aim is to protect the population. Looking at the numbers and severity of cases involving children now, there is a need to vaccinate our children."

"It is up to parents to believe what the experts and practitioners are saying over and over again, or the small but loud voice of detractors."

"Just don't regret it if the child gets infected and goes beyond Category 3."

"We doctors and paediatricians are promoting the vaccine because we do not want any harm to

occur to children and neither do we relish the idea of looking after terribly ill children in the PICU."

He, however, added that Malaysia's paediatric infection rate was not as bad as other countries, like Indonesia or the United States.

"The numbers have been released by the Health Ministry. We have to look at ICU admissions, ventilation rates and deaths rather than the number of infections."

"These are the determinants of whether we have reached the endemic phase."

"All of us will get infected at some point. The important thing is not to go to Categories 4 or 5 or die. These are the numbers that have increased of late."

Up to March 11, a total of 1,119,954 children aged between 5 and 11, or 31.5 per cent of their population in the country, had received the first dose of the vaccine.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 17

RUANGAN : LETTERS

MOST OBESE COUNTRY IN ASIA

BLANKET SUGAR TAX CAN FIGHT OBESITY

THE Health Ministry has sounded the alarm. Too many Malaysians are too fat.

Thirty per cent are overweight and twenty per cent are obese. We are the most obese country in Asia.

Six years ago, I wrote a book, *So Fat Lahl*, because I could see the problem around me.

I wanted to help my friends, relatives and fellow Malaysians lose weight.

But we continue to consume the way we always have.

There are many reasons for obesity but I would like to focus on one problem: sweet drinks.

Whether I'm at a restaurant, cafe, food court, hawker stall or food outlet, I am disturbed by the drinks my fellow diners have ordered.

There is the ubiquitous *teh tarik* and its other sweet companions, including iced tea, coffee, iced lemon, iced lemon tea, soft drinks, energy drinks, fruits juices, milk shakes, frappes and blended drinks.

Mine is plain water.

My drink has zero calories whereas the man at the next table sips a *teh tarik* that contains 200 calories. His son has a glass of soft drink and his wife has a fruit juice, both of which contain 130

calories each.

Having an occasional sweet drink is not a health concern. But most of us drink them daily, and sometimes two or three times a day.

Sugar is addictive. Studies have even suggested that it is as addictive as cocaine.

Some professionals have declared that if sugar was introduced as a new ingredient today, it would be banned because of its negative effect on health.

If we are advised by health professionals or even through a government campaign to give up this habit, some would do so.

Most, however, will not because of the addictive nature of sugar. More than that, consuming beverages is ingrained in our culture.

Something more has to be done. That something is a sugar tax.

We have a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages but this can be expanded to include processed sugar and all products that contain it.

This will increase the price of handmade beverages. Many will object as it will also increase the prices of chocolates, sweets, confectionary, deserts, pastries, jams, sweet snacks and ice cream.

But health professionals will heave a sigh of relief because these

products are filled with calories and contribute to obesity.

To tax refined sugar and sugar-sweetened products is an extreme measure and only a few countries have attempted this, some successfully, some less so.

However, desperate times call for desperate measures and with more than half the country overweight or obese, it is hard to argue that these are not desperate times.

To prevent a public outcry, the tax rate should be introduced gently, beginning at a low rate, and then increased every year.

This allows people to get used to the idea and to slowly change our dietary habits.

It will also allow corporations, suppliers and vendors to make changes to what they have on offer.

We know that obesity is the cause of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, stroke and some types of cancer.

Our health system may not be able to cope and the government may have trouble funding a health system that could be overwhelmed in the coming years. Prevention is better than cure.

TUNKU HALIM

Petaling Jaya, Selangor



An occasional sweet drink is not a problem, but many drink it daily, even two or three times a day. FILE PIC

UM ONLINE SURVEY

To avoid Long Covid is to avoid Covid-19 infection

LONG Covid is a persistent state of ill health after Covid-19 infection that continues for more than three months and is not explained by an alternative diagnosis.

Patients with Long Covid experienced different combinations of symptoms — such as fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, anxiety, cognitive impairment or brain fog, and muscle pain — that get worse after physical activities.

These symptoms could be driven by a direct effect of virus infection and might be explained by several hypotheses, including abnormal immune response, hyperactivation of the immune system, or autoim-

munity. Indirect effects — including reduced social contact, loneliness, incomplete recovery of physical health and loss of employment — could affect psychiatric symptoms.

The Covid-19 Long-term Effects And Recovery (CLEAR) study team from Universiti Malaya conducted an online survey among Covid-19 survivors from July to September last year during the Movement Control Order.

A total of 732 respondents participated. One in five had Long Covid. The most commonly reported symptoms were fatigue, brain fog, depression, anxiety, insomnia and joint or muscle pain.

Females were found to have 58

percent higher odds of experiencing Long Covid compared with males.

According to the autoimmune hypothesis, females have a stronger immune response than males due to genetic and hormonal factors.

This contributes to a more active immune response where activation of white blood cells, production of inflammatory markers and antibodies are stronger than males.

This could be seen as a double-edged sword as it appears protective against severe symptoms and deaths from Covid-19, but it could bring about the emergence of autoimmune-inflammatory symptoms in Long Covid.

Patients with moderate and severe levels of acute Covid-19 had 3 to 3.6 times odds for Long Covid compared with those without symptoms.

Those without symptoms or with mild symptoms also experienced Long Covid (10 and 17.5 per cent respectively) compared with those in the moderate (26.7 per cent) and severe (30.4 per cent) categories.

This may be explained by the immune response to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which stimulates the production of cytokines and other inflammatory mediators, with higher concentrations found in those with a more severe Covid-19 condition.

The multi-systemic inflammatory response to the virus may also be responsible for persistent Covid-19 symptoms in survivors.

To avoid Long Covid is to avoid Covid-19 infection.

We should get vaccinated or boosted, wear masks, maintain physical distancing, practise hand hygiene, avoid crowded and poorly ventilated places, and get tested if we have symptoms.

PROFESSOR DR MOY FOONG MING

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AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : NATION

No GE15 until health situation stable, urges Khairy

SEREMBAN: The public health situation in the country, which has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, needs to be stable before the 15th General Election (GE15) can be held, says Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

"Even when the country has entered the transition to endemic phase, it does not mean that the pandemic has ended," he said.

In fact, he stressed that everyone should be cautious as a general election involves many people.

"When the country's borders are opened, the spacing between the congregants (at mosques and surau) narrowed and the capacity limit terminated, it does not mean that we can do anything we like.

"The Johor state election has just ended, so I feel it is better for the public health situation to be really stable first.

"I also see that the Federal Government has an agreement (Memorandum of Understanding on Transformation and Political Stability) until July, so there is no urgent need for it (GE15) as the government is stable, it will not collapse and laws can be passed in Parliament.

"So let's not do anything unnecessary just because we see a political opportunity," Bernama quoted him as telling reporters after attending a community service programme organised by the Malaysian Association of Medical Assistants yesterday.

Khairy also said discussions must be held with the Election Commission to find the best mechanism for allowing Covid-19 patients to vote in elections.

"Malaysians indeed have the right to vote but as the country is

still (in the midst of) the pandemic, we need to think of a safe mechanism to enable Covid-19 patients to vote without adversely affecting people's health.

"Yes, it is their (Covid-19 patients) right to vote and it's also the right of Malaysians not to get the Covid-19 infection. Hence, in balancing these rights, we need to have the best mechanism," he added.

On a proposal that Low-Risk Covid-19 Assessment and Treatment Centres (PKRC) be made voting centres, Khairy said questions could arise about the health and safety of family members when sending patients to the PKRC.

Khairy also said 54 compound notices were issued during the Johor election, adding that compliance with the Covid-19 standard operating procedure during that period was generally good.



On the ground: Khairy talking to health workers during the Community Service Programme in conjunction with Medical Assistants Day 2022 held at Pasaraya Mydin Senawang. — Bernama

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NATION

Anti-vax theory debunked

Swedish research did not show vaccines alter DNA

By JUNAID IBRAHIM
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PETALING JAYA: Research carried out by the Swedish-based Institute for Clinical Research (ICR) did not show Covid-19 mRNA vaccine altered a human's genetic code or DNA.

In a video on its social media accounts, which Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin retweeted, ICR said the claims made by certain people were factually incorrect.

"Swedish researchers experimented with liver cancer cells that have no resemblance to cells found

in the human body.

"These cancer cells have abnormal chromosomes and produce long interspersed nuclear element-1, or Line-1, which is an enzyme that converts RNA into DNA," the video showed, adding that normal human cells do not produce Line-1 enzymes.

ICR explained that the DNA produced by the enzyme are short sequences located outside the cell's nucleus, and it does not integrate with nucleus DNA.

"Some people have claimed that a Swedish study found that mRNA vaccine can enter liver cells and

change our DNA," said Khairy.

"How true is this claim? Here's @ICR_NIH with the explanation," he tweeted yesterday.

Recently, this research findings have been misused by anti-vaxxers.

An open letter by a group claiming to be "medical experts" has also been making its rounds on WhatsApp, demanding the government pause its vaccination programme.

The group said the Swedish research "has confirmed" its concerns regarding the potential long-term adverse effect of mRNA-based Covid-19 vaccines, including

DNA change.

Vaccines such as Moderna and Comirnaty use mRNA technology rather than the conventional method that uses inactivated virus cells to increase human immunity against Covid-19.

mRNA technology allows human muscle cells to produce proteins resembling the coronavirus' spike proteins. The immune system will recognise the proteins and develop antibodies to fight against them.

ICR also said mRNA vaccines leave the body after they have helped the muscle cells produce the spike protein.

Dip in new Covid-19 cases and infectivity rate

KUALA LUMPUR: The number of new daily Covid-19 cases dropped to 26,250 on Saturday, from 32,800 the previous day, says the Health director-general.

Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said of the total cases recorded on Saturday, 26,073 cases or 99.33% were in Category 1 and 2.

The remaining 177 cases or 0.67% were in Category 3, 4 and 5, he said in a statement yesterday.

He said the country's infectivity rate (Rt) was 0.99, compared to 1.03 on Friday.

On the use of Covid-19 beds for critical cases or at intensive care units of Health Ministry hospitals, Dr Noor Hisham said six states recorded more than 50%.

They are Putrajaya at 167%, Kelantan (69%), Johor (68%), Kuala Lumpur (65%), Selangor (58%) and Perak (53%).

He added that the number of Covid-19 patients who required respiratory assistance had decreased to 211 patients from 231 on Friday, while the percentage of ventilator usage on Saturday was 24% compared to 26% the day before.

On the Covid-19 infection among senior citizens, Dr Noor Hisham said there were 367,522 cases involving the group, recorded from March 19, 2020, to March 9, 2022, which is 9.9% of the total 3,711,199 positive cases recorded in the country during the period.

He said between Jan 25, 2020, and March 3 this year, a total of 154 clusters were reported at care centres for senior citizens.

Dr Noor Hisham added that the Covid-19 death rate among the elderly was higher compared with other age groups, and that unvaccinated elderly were the most at risk. — Bernama

Nearly 65% of adults have been boosted

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 15,259,493 adults or 64.9% of the population have received a Covid-19 booster dose.

Based on the CovidNow website, a total of 22,934,341 individuals or 97.5% of the population have also completed their vaccination and 23,210,853 or 98.7% have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

For children aged between five and 11, a total of 1,144,379 or 32.2% of the population have received the first dose under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids), Bernama reported.

As for adolescents aged between 12 and 17, a total of 2,836,325 of them or 91.2% of the population have completed their vaccination, while 2,936,489 or 94.4% have received at least one dose.

On Saturday, a total of 46,688 doses of the vaccine were dispensed. This includes 25,471 first doses, 1,047 second doses and 20,170 booster doses, bringing the cumulative number of vaccine doses administered under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme to 68,113,082.



A welcome distraction: Children waiting to get their vaccination receive balloons to help calm their nerves at a PPC in Kuala Lumpur. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAM/The Star

Experts: High death rates due to spike in active cases

By ASHLEY TANG
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PETALING JAYA: The rising Covid-19 death rate in the country is due to the high number of active cases and the waning effects of the vaccine, say health experts.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the fatalities started to rise when the number of active cases exceeded 150,000.

"The pattern is consistent and highly correlated," she said, adding that the reason for this was also due to waning antibodies.

Dr Malina said although the Omicron variant generally caused milder symptoms compared to the Delta variant, but due to waning antibodies in an individual, its impacts are similar for those in the high-risk groups.

"Children have also manifested similar conditions. As such, we have no choice but to expedite the vaccination process and to protect those who cannot be medically vaccinated," she said when contacted yesterday.

Covid-19 deaths had initially slowly tapered off in November last year after hitting a peak of 592 deaths on Sept 11 due to the Delta wave that swept the country in June last year.

But according to the CovidNow website, Covid-19 death rates have been gradually rising since the beginning of February. It reached a high of 79 deaths on March 3.

Those who were unvaccinated had a higher chance of dying at 2.17 per 100,000 adults compared to those who were vaccinated. For those vaccinated with two doses, the rate was 0.33 per 100,000 adults, while those fully boosted was at 0.05 per 100,000 adults based on a seven-day average as of March 3.

The number of brought-in-dead cases have also increased, reaching a high of 29 cases on March 5.

Dr Malina said the brought-in-dead cases could possibly be due to the high transmission rate in the community.

"Some of those who had been infected may not be aware of their condition. They then become sick without proper treatment, and

complications arise with severe outcomes," she said.

On whether the death rates will drop in the coming months, Dr Malina said that it would depend on the vaccination rate for booster doses and the number of active cases.

"If we can achieve a booster rate of 70% to 80%, and active cases of less than 150,000, the death rates are expected to fall," she said.

The current active cases in the country stands at 323,785 as of yesterday.

Prof Dr Moy Foong Ming of Universiti Malaysia's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Medicine said the peak of death rates in September 2021 was mostly due to low vaccination rates and the spread of the Delta variant.

"The increasing trend since February may be due to the waning effects of the vaccine among the adult population," she said.

Dr Moy added that the emergence of Omicron, which is more infectious than Delta, had also contributed to many breakthrough infections.

"The elderly and high-risk individuals with low immunity were the majority who had serious symptoms which caused death.

"Omicron is relatively mild compared to Delta, but it will cause serious symptoms and deaths among these vulnerable groups," she said.

She pointed out that if the chain of infection was broken and the infectivity rate reduced to below one, coupled with a higher uptake of booster doses, the total caseloads would come down.

As such, she said the death rates would also reduce proportionately.

CovidNow also showed that deaths according to age group was the highest among those above the age of 60, followed by those between the ages of 18 and 59.

The deaths of those under the age of 18 were fewer compared to the older groups.

Dr Moy said the elderly had a higher death rate as they had lower immunity and might have multimorbidity.

Thus, she said they had higher risks of mortality compared to those

aged 18 to 59 even though both groups were fully vaccinated.

"It is important to protect the elderly because the manifestation of the disease on them may be different from those who are younger," she said.

She noted that Omicron was dangerous for anyone who was not vaccinated, children and adults alike.

"With high vaccination rates and a good proportion of the adult population having booster doses, we notice that Covid-19 related hospitalisation and ICU usage were lower during the Omicron wave.

"Our healthcare system is still in good shape and able to manage non-Covid-19 cases.

"The coupling effect of high caseload and high number of deaths is also absent compared to the Delta wave.

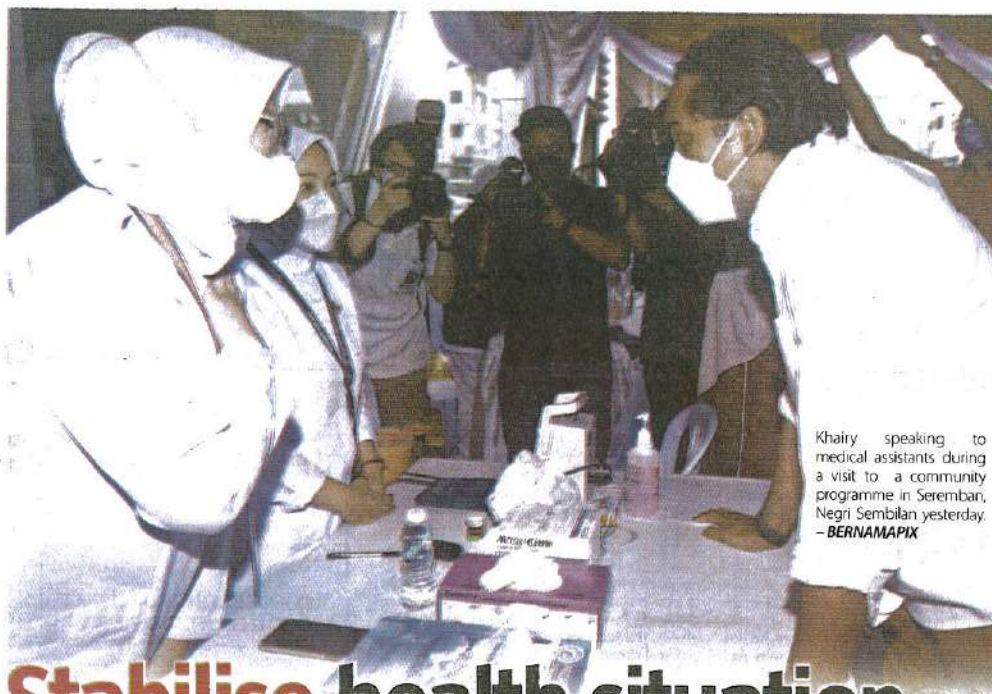
"During this Omicron wave, more people are being infected but the majority only had mild symptoms.

Hopefully, the massive transmission will not lead to a more lethal variant that may reverse all our good work," she said.

AKHBAR : THE SUN ON MONDAY

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS



Khairy speaking to medical assistants during a visit to a community programme in Seremban, Negri Sembilan yesterday.
—BERNAMAPIX

Stabilise health situation first before GE15: Khairy

► 'Transition to endemic phase does not mean pandemic is over'

SEREMBAN: Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the public health situation in the country, which has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, needs to be stabilised before the 15th general election (GE15) can be held.

"Even when the country has entered the transition to endemic phase, it does not mean that the pandemic has ended as we still have to be careful as the general election will involve a lot of people.

"When the country's borders are opened, spacing between congregants (at mosques and surau) would be narrowed and the capacity limit terminated.

"These do not mean that we can do anything we like. The Johor state election has just ended, so I feel it is better for the public health situation to be really stable first.

"The federal government has an agreement (Memorandum of Understanding on Transformation and Political Stability) until July, so there is no urgent need to hold GE15 as the government is stable.

"It will not collapse and laws can be passed in Parliament, so let's not do anything unnecessary just because we see a political opportunity."

He was speaking after attending a community service programme organised by the Malaysian Association of Medical Assistants yesterday, Bernama reported.

Khairy also said discussions must be held with the Election Commission (EC) to find the best mechanism for the suggestion of allowing Covid-19 patients to vote in the elections.

"Malaysians have the right to vote, but as the country is still hit by the pandemic, we

need to think of a safe mechanism to enable Covid-19 patients to vote without adversely affecting other people's health.

"Yes, it is their right to vote and it's also the right of Malaysians not to get the Covid-19 infection. Hence, in balancing these rights, we need to have the best mechanism," he added.

On a proposal by some quarters that the Low-Risk Covid-19 Assessment and Treatment Centres be made voting centres, Khairy said almost 96% of Covid-19 patients quarantined themselves at home.

He said if the centres were used as voting centres, the health safety of family members would be at risk as they would be exposed to Covid-19 infection when sending patients to the centres.

"It can be done but we need to discuss this with the EC," he added.

64.9% of adult population given booster dose

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 15,259,493 adults (64.9% of the population) have received their Covid-19 booster dose as of Saturday.

Based on the CovidNOW website, a total of 22,934,341 individuals (97.5% of the population) have also completed their vaccination and 23,210,853 (98.7%) have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

For children aged between five and 11, a total of 1,144,379 (32.2% of the group) have received the first dose of the vaccine under

the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children.

For adolescents aged between 12 and 17, a total of 2,836,325 (91.2% of the group) have completed their vaccination, while 2,936,489 (94.4%) have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

On Saturday, a total of 46,688 doses were administered, involving 25,471 as first doses, 1,047 as second shots and 20,170 as boosters, with the cumulative number of doses given under the immunisation

programme at 68,113,082.

Meanwhile, according to the Health Ministry GitHub portal, 77 deaths due to Covid-19 were recorded yesterday, with Penang recording the highest at 12, followed by Selangor and Kelantan with 11 cases each.

Kedah recorded nine deaths, while Johor had eight, Perak with seven, Perlis and Terengganu had four cases each, Negri Sembilan and Kuala Lumpur with three cases each, Sabah had two and Sarawak, Pahang and Malacca had one case each. —Bernama

Daily cases drop to below 30,000

KUALA LUMPUR: The number of new daily Covid-19 cases recorded on Saturday dropped to 26,250 from 32,800 the previous day.

Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said of the total cases, 26,073 (99.33%) were in categories One and Two.

A total of 177 cases, or 0.67%, were in categories Three, Four and Five, he said in a statement on the development of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

He added that the country's infectivity rate (Rt) was 0.99, compared to 1.03 last Friday.

On the use of Covid-19 beds for critical cases or at intensive care units at the ministry's hospitals, Noor Hisham said six states recorded more than 50% usage on Saturday.

They are Putrajaya at 167%, Kelantan at 69%, Johor at 68%, Kuala Lumpur at 65%, Selangor at 58% and Perak at 53%. —Bernama