

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 11

RUANGAN : KOMENTAR

Vaksinasi kanak-kanak cegah komplikasi akibat COVID-19



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Ketika ini Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) melaksanakan Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kanak-kanak (PICKids). Vaksin yang diiktiraf selamat untuk kanak-kanak berusia lima tahun ke atas di seluruh dunia pada waktu ini ialah formulasi vaksin Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech).

Kanak-kanak diberi dua dos dengan jarak lapan minggu di antara kedua-duanya. Setiap dos bersamaan dengan 10mcg vaksin mRNA (0.2mls).

Kajian klinikal ke atas 2,268 kanak-kanak penerima vaksin Prozer-BioNTech mendapati vaksin ini selamat dan menghasilkan pertahanan badan efektif terhadap virus COVID-19, iaitu sehingga 90.7 peratus.

Setakat ini lebih 8 juta kanak-kanak di serata dunia divaksinasi setakat ini, sekali gus meyakinkan kita vaksin ini selamat untuk golongan itu.

Vaksin Pfizer-BioNTech tidak boleh diberikan kepada kanak-kanak mempunyai sejarah alahan teruk (*immediate*) kepada vaksin itu atau kandungannya.

Kanak-kanak mengalami alahan tidak serius dalam tempoh 72 jam selepas menerima vaksin dos pertama juga tidak boleh diberikan dos kedua.

Kumpulan kanak-kanak berisiko tinggi mendapat jangkitan COVID-19 serius, kemasukan ke unit rawatan rapi (ICU) atau kematian adalah mereka yang mempunyai sejarah masalah kesihatan seperti masalah jantung, sistem pernafasan kronik, hipertensi, diabetis, buah pinggang, sistem pertahanan badan lemah, masalah saraf, autisme dan obesiti.

Oleh itu, kanak-kanak mempunyai penyakit ini

perlu diberikan vaksin secepat mungkin. Antara kesan sampingan vaksin yang biasa dialami kanak-kanak ialah kesakitan pada tempat suntikan, kemerahan dan bengkak.

Mereka juga mungkin mengalami gejala seperti rasa letih, sakit kepala, sakit otot dan demam. Jika mereka mempunyai gejala seperti ini, mereka perlu diberi ubat demam atau penahan sakit seperti paracetamol serta digalakkan berehat sehingga kembali pulih.

Kesan sampingan serius sering dikaitkan dengan vaksin Pfizer-BioNTech ialah jangkitan pada otot jantung (*myocarditis*) dan selaput jantung (*pericarditis*).

Keadaan ini lazimnya berlaku dalam masa beberapa hari sehingga seminggu daripada tarikh suntikan.



Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kanak-Kanak mampu mencegah komplikasi Sindrom Keradangan Pelbagai Sistem Kanak-Kanak.
(Foto hiasan)

Tanda-tanda *myocarditis* atau *pericarditis* ialah sesak nafas, sakit dada, pitam, pengsan atau rasa denyut nadi laju atau tidak sekata.

Jika dilihat kepada kajian pada Disember lalu, daripada 8,674,378 dos vaksin diberikan, cuma 12 kes *myocarditis* dilaporkan. Semua kes ini mengalami gejala ringan dan sembuh sepenuhnya.

Kajian ini juga mendapati kes *myocarditis* sebenarnya lebih tinggi dalam kalangan remaja berusia 12 tahun ke atas yang diberikan vaksin Pfizer-BioNTech.

Secara keseluruhannya, risiko *myocarditis* jauh lebih rendah dalam kalangan kanak-kanak lima tahun ke atas jika dibandingkan dengan golongan remaja.

Selepas atau sebelum menerima vaksin COVID-19, kanak-kanak boleh menerima apa-apa vaksin lain dengan syarat mereka sembuh sepenuhnya. Jarak dua minggu adalah digalakkan antara vaksin COVID-19 dengan vaksin lain.

Kanak-kanak tidak digalakkan mengambil ubat sebelum atau ketika divaksin seperti paracetamol dan ibuprofen tetapi boleh melakukan demikian sebaik saja mengalami gejala seperti demam, sakit kepala, sakit otot atau sakit lengan.

Program imunisasi COVID-19 untuk kanak-kanak lima tahun ke atas sebenarnya berperanan mencegah komplikasi Sindrom Keradangan Pelbagai Sistem pada Kanak-Kanak (MIS-C).

MIS-C boleh berlaku antara dua hingga enam minggu selepas dijangkiti virus COVID-19 dan 60 hingga 70 peratus kanak-kanak yang mengalami keadaan ini perlu dimasukkan ke ICU. Lebih menyedihkan, MIS-C ini mempunyai satu hingga dua peratus risiko kematian.

Oleh itu, ibu bapa perlu membuat keputusan bijak bagi melindungi anak daripada jangkitan COVID-19 yang serius serta komplikasinya.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 13
RUANGAN : MINDA PEMBACA

Jangan sebar berita tidak benar dos penggalak

Mahani
Mohamad,
Segambut

Malaysia sudah mencipta sejarah sendiri apabila jumlah kes COVID-19 direkod melepasi 30,000. Angka ini menggerunkan, tetapi apabila melihat ana-

lisis lebih terperinci, kita tahu ia disebabkan varian Omicron.

Walaupun kebanyakan kes direkod sebagai tahap satu dan dua, tetapi kita tidak boleh berlapang dada. Sebaliknya sebagai warganegara jika belum mengambil suntikan dos penggalak, cepatlah berbuat demikian.

Hari ini kebanyakan kita berasa selesa dengan dua dos vaksin yang diterima. Masing-masing terasa cukup kebal hingga tidak lagi melihat keperluan mengambil dos penggalak.

Kita melihat pelbagai usaha dibuat oleh kerajaan untuk memujuk rakyat mengambil dos penggalak sekali gus menghalang penyebaran COVID-19. Namun, kita juga tahu terlalu banyak kempen dan kisah lain disebarkan yang membuatkan rakyat menolak dos penggalak.

Banyak kisah ini dibuat untuk menakut-nakutkan rakyat dan disebar oleh mereka yang bukan bertauliah dan pakar.

Masing-masing berasa mereka paling layak bercakap untuk menyeru orang ramai jangan ambil dos penggalak.

Sebenarnya jika kita secara peribadi tidak mahu ambil duduk diam sahaja. Jangan pula menyebarkan kepada orang lain. Memang dunia akhir zaman ini sudah disebut dalam al-Quran akan ada penyakit yang tiada ubat.

Jadi apakah yang perlu kita takutkan? Adakah dengan mengambil dos penggalak, kita tidak akan mati? Ajal, rezeki dan jodoh itu ditentukan tuhan. Namun, untuk menyebarkan penyakit itu pilihan kita sendiri. Berfikirlah lebih jauh dan tawakal.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 14

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Penggunaan katil ICU lebih 50 peratus di Perlis, Sabah

Kelantan kekal jadi negeri tertinggi dengan 70 peratus

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Putrajaya: Perlis dan Sabah negeri terbaru mencatat penggunaan katil kes kritikal atau unit rawatan rapi (ICU) melebihi 50 peratus.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata perkembangan itu menjadikan lapan negeri yang sudah melebihi 50 peratus penggunaan katil ICU.

Katanya, Kelantan kekal menjadi negeri tertinggi dengan penggunaan sebanyak 70 peratus, namun jumlah menurun sedikit, berbanding kadar yang dilaporkan sebelum ini, iaitu 94 peratus.

"Putrajaya mencatatkan penggunaan sebanyak 67 peratus, Kuala Lumpur (65 peratus), Johor (63 peratus), Melaka (61 peratus), Perak (58 peratus), Perlis (55 peratus) dan Sabah (53 peratus)," katanya semalam.

Bagi katil bukan ICU, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, ada 12 negeri yang sudah menggunakan melebihi 50 peratus, iaitu Selangor mencapai 101 peratus dan masing-masing 91 peratus di Kuala Lumpur dan Perak.

"Turut dilaporkan ialah Kelantan dengan penggunaan 87 peratus, Putrajaya (84 peratus), Perlis (78 peratus), Pahang (69 peratus), Johor (68 peratus) serta

masing-masing 60 peratus dilaporkan di Terengganu dan Sabah.

"Ini diikuti Pulau Pinang dengan 57 peratus serta Sarawak sebanyak 55 peratus," katanya.

Sementara itu, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, bagi pesakit COVID-19 yang memerlukan alat bantuan pernafasan, jumlahnya meningkat kepada 193 pesakit menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan penggunaan ialah 35 peratus.

Beliau berkata, ada 75 kematian akibat COVID-19 kelmarin, menjadikan jumlah angka korban meningkat kepada 32,749 kes.

Katanya, kematian tertinggi dilaporkan di Selangor dengan 22 kes, diikuti Johor (13) dan Sabah (11).

Selain itu, beliau berkata, kematian masing-masing tujuh kes dilaporkan di Kedah dan Perak, masing-masing tiga kes di Ke-

lantan, Melaka dan Pulau Pinang, Terengganu (dua kes).

"Turut dilaporkan ialah masing-masing satu kes di Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Sarawak dan Kuala Lumpur.

"Daripada jumlah angka korban itu, terdapat 20 kes kematian di luar fasiliti kesihatan (BID). Perkembangan itu menjadikan sehingga kini sebanyak 6,710 kes kematian dilaporkan, sebelum bantuan perubatan dapat diberikan.

"Daripada jumlah kes BID itu, lapan kes dilaporkan di Sabah, Selangor (lima), masing-masing dua kes di Johor, Kedah, Kelantan dan satu di Kuala Lumpur," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, Kementerian Kesihatan mengesan 3,494 kluster tempat kerja sejak 25 Januari 2020 sehingga 26 Februari lalu.

Beliau berkata, setakat 26 Fe-

Putrajaya catatkan penggunaan sebanyak 67 peratus, Kuala Lumpur (65 peratus), Johor (63 peratus), Melaka (61 peratus), Perak (58 peratus), Perlis (55 peratus) manakal Sabah (53 peratus).



Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan

bruari lalu, sebanyak 133 kluster tempat kerja dilaporkan dan jumlah kluster berkenaan mewakili empat peratus daripada keseluruhan kluster tempat kerja, dalam tempoh tiga tahun kebelakangan ini.

"Pada 2022, majoriti kluster tempat kerja dari subkategori sektor pembuatan, diikuti subkategori perkhidmatan dan pentadbiran awam, pertanian, pembinaan, dan perlombongan atau kuari," katanya.

Sikap antara punca Melayu kurang ambil dos penggalak

Kuala Lumpur: Sikap 'ambil vaksin pun akan kena' antara punca masyarakat Melayu masih kurang mendapatkan dos penggalak dan vaksin kanak-kanak melawan COVID-19.

Pakar Perubatan Kesihatan Awam dari Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Prof Madya Dr Halimatus Sakdiah Minhat, berkata seseengah individu berpendapat, jangkitan COVID-19 sememangnya sudah ada dalam masyarakat, meletakkan mereka pada risiko yang sama tanpa mengira status pelarian, mendorong untuk tidak mengambil dos penggalak seterusnya menghalang anak untuk mendapatkan vaksin, terutama kanak-kanak 5 hingga 11 tahun.

Katanya, tidak dinafikan individu yang sudah mendapat vaksinasi juga berisiko dijangkiti, namun, rakyat harus faham konsep vaksin dalam mencegah penyakit serius, seterusnya mencegah keperluan dimasukkan ke hospital.

"Terdapat juga individu yang

berasaskan mereka seharusnya mendapatkan imuniti semula jadi," katanya.

Media sebelum ini melaporkan tidak ramai orang Melayu mengambil dos penggalak dan menyertai Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-Kanak (PICKIDS).

Mengulas lanjut mengenai program pelarian dalam kalangan kanak-kanak, Dr Halimatus Sakdiah, berkata kebanyakan ibu bapa takut dengan kesan sampingan vaksin seperti yang disebar di media sosial dan waswas untuk mendapatkan pelarian untuk anak mereka.

Katanya, ada yang mudah percaya kepada berita kurang tepat dan khabar angin juga menjadi satu daripada punca masyarakat Melayu membuat keputusan tidak mengambil dos penggalak dan vaksin untuk kanak-kanak.

Sementara itu, Ketua Penolong Pengarah Bahagian Pembangunan Kesihatan Keluarga Kementerian Kesihatan, Dr Nur Syaki-

rah Awai, berkata penularan virus COVID-19, khususnya varian Omicron yang mudah berjangkit, meletakkan kanak-kanak yang belum divaksinasi dalam kategori berisiko tinggi, susulan peningkatan mendadak jangkitan dalam kalangan mereka.

Daripada 23,000 kes baharu dilaporkan semalam, katanya, 3,600 membabitkan kanak-kanak bawah usia 11 tahun.

"Walaupun ketika diagnosis COVID-19 mereka berada dalam Kategori Satu atau Dua, tetapi selepas dua hingga enam minggu jangkitan, mereka boleh mengalami satu keadaan yang dipanggil sebagai 'Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C)'.

"MIS-C ini boleh menyebabkan simptom seperti susah bernafas, demam dan sebagainya serta kebanyakan kanak-kanak yang terkesan memerlukan rawatan dalam unit rawatan rapi (ICU) serta boleh membawa kepada kematian," katanya.

Dr Nur Syakirah berkata, faktor kematian kanak-kanak yang mengalami keadaan MIS-C itu, boleh disebabkan daripada kegagalan fungsi sistem organ dalam badan seperti jantung, otak, paru-paru dan buah pinggang.

Kes sembuh terkini 30,624 melebihi jangkitan baharu

Putrajaya: Sebanyak 30,624 kes sembuh daripada virus COVID-19 dilaporkan kelmarin, melebihi jumlah kes baharu.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata sehingga kini jumlah individu yang sudah sembuh daripada wabak itu meningkat kepada 3,116,564 kes atau 90.5 peratus daripada jumlah keseluruhan kes.

Mengulas mengenai kes baharu, katanya, jangkitan kembali berada di bawah 30,000 kes iaitu sebanyak 23,100 kes yang menjadikan sehingga kini terdapat seramai 3,442,736 individu sudah dijangkiti virus itu.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, daripada jumlah kes baharu, terdapat 22,802 kes membabitkan penularan tempatan dengan 298 kes import.

Katanya, kes baharu itu membabitkan 99.19 peratus atau 22,914 kes pesakit dalam kategori satu dan dua, iaitu tidak mempunyai gejala dan bergejala ringan.

"Hanya 0.81 peratus bersa-

maan 186 kes dalam kategori tiga hingga lima.

"Bagi kes dalam kategori tiga hingga lima, angka paling tinggi membabitkan individu yang sudah menerima dua dos, namun masih belum mendapatkan dos penggalak serta individu berusia 60 tahun keatas, iaitu masing-masing sebanyak 84 kes atau 45.16 peratus.

"Selain itu, sebanyak 82 kes (44.09 peratus) membabitkan individu mempunyai komorbid, sudah menerima dos penggalak (63 kes), tidak divaksinasi atau belum lengkap divaksinasi (39 kes) serta ibu mengandung (dua kes).

"Setakat ini terdapat 361 kes sedang dirawat di unit rawatan rapi (ICU), membabitkan 133 kes disahkan COVID-19 serta 228 lagi disyaki, kemungkinan dalam siasatan.

"Bagi pesakit dalam ICU dan memerlukan alat bantuan pernafasan, sehingga kini terdapat sejumlah 193 kes iaitu 76 kes disahkan COVID-19 serta 117 kes lagi disyaki, berkemungkinan dalam siasatan," katanya.



Dr Halimatus Sakdiah

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 15

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

KKM pantau 'decoupling trend'

Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) akan memantau *decoupling trend* untuk tempoh dua minggu akan datang bagi mengambil kira pelaksanaan kelengkapan tambahan pada masa akan datang.

Tren itu akan dilihat sama ada ia berkekalan atau berubah berikutan berlaku jangkitan tinggi COVID-19 akibat varian Omicron ketika ini.

Menteri Kanan Pertahanan, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, berkata perkara itu dinyatakan dalam taklimat oleh Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin dalam Mesyuarat Kedua Menteri Kuartet COVID-19 ke-13, semalam.

"Kita dapat melihat *decoupling trend* buat masa ini iaitu bilangan kemasukan ke Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) dan kematian akibat COVID-19 ialah 80 hingga 90 peratus lebih rendah berbanding pelaporan pada Ogos tahun lalu walaupun kes lebih tinggi ketika ini.

"Ketika ini, kadar penggunaan katil di ICU dan alat bantuan pernafasan masih mencukupi walaupun diakui kadar penggunaannya sedikit meningkat.

"Seperti dimaklumkan oleh Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, ia disebabkan sebahagian pesakit COVID-19 kategori 1 dan 2 dinasihatkan untuk menjalani isolasi di hospital bagi mendapatkan pemantauan lebih rapi," katanya.

Hishammuddin berkata, varian Omicron tidak akan menyebabkan kerajaan melaksanakan semula sekatan secara besar-besaran.

"Salah satu sebabnya ialah kerana ramai rakyat sudah menerima vaksinasi lengkap. Lebih 97.5 peratus dewasa menerima dua dos vaksin manakala 62 peratus dewasa menerima dos penggalak dan 90 peratus remaja pula divaksin termasuklah program vaksinasi untuk kanak-kanak yang giat," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 10

RUANGAN : COVID-19

Sentiasa siap siaga

Penggunaan katil ICU catat lebih 50 peratus di luar negeri

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Kuala Lumpur

Luar negeri mencatatkan penggunaan katil kes kritikal atau Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) untuk pesakit Covid-19 yang melebihi 50 peratus kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, luar negeri itu ialah Kelantan (70 peratus), Putrajaya (67 peratus), Kuala Lumpur (65 peratus), Johor (63 peratus), Melaka (61 peratus), Perak (58 peratus), Perlis (55 peratus) dan Sabah (53 peratus).

Beliau berkata, peratusan pengisian melebihi 50 peratus bagi katil bukan ICU pula adalah membabitkan 12 negeri iaitu Selangor (106 peratus), Kuala Lumpur (91

peratus), Perak (91 peratus), Kelantan (87 peratus), Putrajaya (84 peratus), Perlis (78 peratus), Pahang (69 peratus), Johor (68 peratus), Terengganu (60 peratus), Sabah (60 peratus), Pulau Pinang (57 peratus) dan Sarawak (55 peratus).

"Sementara itu, bagi penggunaan fasiliti kesihatan membabitkan katil Pusat Kuarantin dan Rawatan Covid-19 Berisiko Rendah (PKRC), hanya satu negeri iaitu Melaka (57 peratus) menunjukkan peratusan pengisian melebihi 50 peratus.

"Data lain juga menunjukkan pesakit Covid-19 yang memerlukan alat bantuan pernafasan atau ventilator meningkat kepada 193 pesakit.

"Ia membabitkan peratusan penggunaan ventilator 35 peratus daripada keseluruhan ventilator untuk pesakit Covid-19 dan bukan Covid-19," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian dalam kenyataan media Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) semalam mengenai penggunaan fasiliti kesihatan khusus bagi kes Covid-19 kelmarin.

Dr Noor Hisham menjelaskan, secara keseluruhannya, setiap negeri sudah bersedia siaga dengan pelan tindak balas cepat sekiranya berlaku peningkatan kes yang memerlukan kemasukan ke PKRC, hospital dan ICU.

"Apa-apa pun, KKM ingin menjelaskan bahawa terdapat perbezaan di antara data

harian kemasukan kes Covid-19 ke hospital berbanding kes Covid-19 kategori 1 hingga 5 yang baharu di kesan pada setiap hari.

"Ini memandangkan keadaan klinikal pesakit yang dinamik dan mungkin merosot atau bertambah baik sepanjang dijangkiti Covid-19," katanya.

Beliau berkata, misalnya, semasa dikesan, mungkin pesakit berada pada kategori 2A dan diisolasi di rumah melalui Home Surveillance Order (HSO) digital, namun status kesihatan pesakit boleh merosot ke kategori 3 atau lebih dan memerlukan kemasukan ke hospital.

Pada masa sama, katanya, terdapat juga kes Covid-19 berisiko tinggi dari kategori 1 dan 2 yang memerlukan kemasukan ke PKRC dan hospital sebagai langkah berjaga-jaga.

23,100 kes baharu, 30,624 kes sembuh

Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) melaporkan 23,100 kes baharu Covid-19, kelmarin menjadikan jumlah kumulatif penularan wabak itu dalam negara setakat ini adalah 3,442,736 kes.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, sebanyak 30,624 atau 90.5 peratus kes dilaporkan sembuh yang melebihi kes baharu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes sembuh 3,116,564 kes.

"Daripada keseluruhan kes baharu, 298 adalah kes import membabitkan 262 warganegara (87.9 peratus) dan 36 bukan warganegara (12.1 peratus).

"Sebanyak 22,802 kes adalah penularan tempatan membabitkan 22,150 warganegara (97.1 peratus) dan 652 bukan warganegara (2.9 peratus)," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, sebanyak 361 kes memerlukan rawatan di Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) dengan 133 kes disahkan Covid-19, bakinya 228 kes disyaki, kemungkinan dan kes dalam siasatan.

Katanya, bagi kes memerlukan bantuan pernafasan pula 193 kes dengan 76 kes disahkan Covid-19, sementara 117 kes disyaki, kemungkinan dan kes dalam siasatan.

"Pada 28 Februari (kelmarin), kes Covid-19 yang dimasukkan ke hospital



Sebanyak 22,802 kes adalah penularan tempatan membabitkan 22,150 warganegara (97.1 peratus) dan 652 bukan warganegara (2.9 peratus)"

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah adalah 1,555 kes.

"Daripada 1,555 kes ini, 592 kes (38.1 peratus) adalah kategori 3, 4, dan 5; dan 963 kes (61.9 peratus) lagi adalah terdiri daripada kategori 1 dan 2," katanya.

Memperincikan lagi kategori kes harian Covid-19 kelmarin, beliau berkata, daripada 23,100 kes yang dilaporkan sebanyak 186 kes (0.81 peratus) adalah kategori 3, 4, dan 5; dan 22,914 kes (99.19 peratus) lagi adalah terdiri daripada kategori 1 dan 2.

"Pecahan kategori kes adalah, Kategori 1: 8,304 kes (35.95 peratus); Kategori 2: 14,610 kes (63.24 peratus); Kategori 3: 96 kes (0.42 peratus); Kategori 4: 39 kes (0.17 peratus); dan Kategori 5: 51 kes (0.22 peratus).

"Daripada 186 kes Covid-19 kategori 3, 4, dan 5 yang baharu dilaporkan pada 28 Februari (kelmarin), sebanyak 39 kes (20.97 peratus) tidak divaksinasi atau belum lengkap divaksinasi," katanya.

24.8 peratus populasi kanak-kanak sudah terima dos pertama

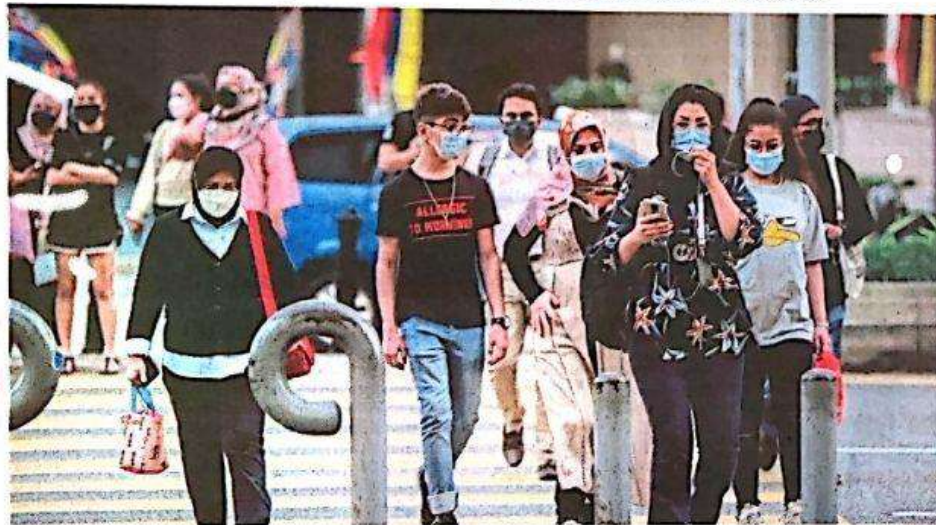
Kuala Lumpur: Sebanyak 879,264 individu atau 24.8 peratus populasi kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun di Malaysia sudah menerima dos pertama vaksin Covid-19 melalui Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-Kanak (PICKids) setakat kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data menerusi laman web Covidnow, sejumlah 14,660,956 individu atau 62.3 peratus populasi dewasa di negara pula sudah menerima dos penggalak Covid-19 dan seramai 22,949,368 atau 97.5 peratus sudah melengkapkan vaksinasi mereka manakala 23,229,321 atau 98.7 peratus

menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun, sebanyak 2,801,180 individu atau 90 peratus daripada populasi itu sudah melengkapkan vaksinasi mereka manakala 2,896,290 atau 93.1 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Vaksinasi harian kelmarin menyaksikan 115,202 dos vaksin diberikan meliputi 34,200 dos pertama, 1,259 dos kedua dan 79,743 dos penggalak, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif dos vaksin yang diberikan di bawah Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) sebanyak 67,208,978. - Bernama



TINJAUAN orang ramai ketika waktu pulang bekerja di Jalan Ampang, kelmarin. Kenenterian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) melaporkan kadar individu positif Covid-19 menunjukkan trend peningkatan yang ketara dengan jumlah kes positif harian melebihi 20,000 kes. - Gambar NSTP/ASYRAF HAMZAH

Tempat kerja sumbang 3,494 kluster

Putrajaya: Sebanyak 3,494 kluster tempat kerja dikesan sejak 25 Januari 2020 sehingga 26 Februari lalu, kata Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

Beliau berkata, setakat 26 Februari lalu, sebanyak 133 kluster tempat kerja dilaporkan dan jumlah berkecuali mewakili empat peratus dari keseluruhan kluster tempat kerja dalam tempoh tiga tahun kebelaka

ngan ini.

"Pada 2022, majoriti kluster tempat kerja adalah dari subkategori sektor pembuatan, diikuti subkategori perkhidmatan dan pentadbiran awam, pertanian, pembinaan, dan perlombongan atau kuari.

"Untuk tahun ini, jumlah kluster tempat kerja tertinggi dilaporkan pada ME 6/2022 dengan 23 kluster diikuti trend penurunan pada ME 7/2022 dan ME 8/2022

dengan 14 kluster dilaporkan pada kedua-dua minggu.

"Secara keseluruhannya, sebanyak 201,281 kes (63 peratus) daripada keseluruhan kluster tempat kerja membabitkan kes warga asing," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, siasatan mendapati, sejak 1 Januari 2021 hingga 26 Februari lalu, punca penularan paling tinggi adalah di tem-

pat kerja (56.8 peratus), diikuti asrama pekerja (29.08 peratus), rumah kongsi (13.38 peratus), tempat lain (0.51 peratus) dan rumah sewa (0.23 peratus).

"Risiko jangkitan atau penularan berkemungkinan boleh berlaku dalam kalangan komuniti dan seterusnya merebak di tempat kerja, begitu juga sebaliknya iaitu boleh menular dari tempat kerja ke dalam kalangan komuniti," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 11

RUANGAN : COVID-19

KPM dalam peringkat akhir bincang kaedah pembelajaran sesi baharu persekolahan

Oleh Nor Fazlina Abdul Rahim
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Pasir Mas

Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM) kini di peringkat akhir perbincangan berhubung kaedah pembelajaran yang akan digunakan apabila sesi persekolahan baharu 2022 bermula bulan ini.

Menteri Kanan Pendidikan, Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin (*gambar*) berkata, pihaknya perlu mengambil kira semua faktor untuk diteliti bagi mencari keseimbangan demi masa depan anak-anak.

Katanya, ia menjadi cabaran buat KPM untuk mencari pendekatan terbaik terutama jumlah vaksin di kalangan kanak-kanak masih rendah.

"Jika dulu ketika kita mengumumkan pembukaan sekolah untuk sekolah rendah, ramai ibu bapa tidak berpuas hati dan bimbang selain menggunakan alasan



Cabaran buat KPM

anak mereka belum divaksin dan kerajaan belum menyediakan vaksin.

"Namun kini, apabila vaksin sudah ada, ibu bapa bertindak sebaliknya dan tidak membawa anak mereka untuk divaksin menyebabkan jumlah bilangan kanak-kanak yang menerima vaksin masih rendah," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang media selepas

meninjau persiapan akhir pusat peperiksaan Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) 2021 di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA) Lati di sini, semalam.

Radzi berkata, sekiranya keadaan itu berterusan, agak sukar dalam konteks penggiliran sekolah di mana ibu bapa mahu anak mereka ke sekolah tanpa penggiliran supaya sentiasa dapat ber-

sama dengan guru.

"Namun pada masa sama, bilangan vaksin masih rendah. Itu cabaran buat kami di KPM untuk mencari pendekatan terbaik."

"Semalam (kelmarin), saya ada berbincang dengan Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin berhubung perkara ini dalam usaha memastikan anak-anak menerima vaksin termasuk di Kelantan."

"Justeru, KPM dalam peringkat akhir perbincangan berkaitan pendekatan diambil sebaik sahaja bermulanya sesi persekolahan 2022 bulan ini," katanya.

"Bilangan vaksin masih rendah. Itu cabaran buat kami di KPM untuk mencari pendekatan terbaik"
Dr Radzi

Kuala Lumpur: Pengembara dari luar negara yang tiba di Malaysia melalui tiga program tidak perlu lagi menjalani ujian enam hari Covid-19 Antigen Rapid Test Kit (RTK-Ag) (kendiri dan profesional) bermula Khamis ini.

Menteri Kesihatan Khairy Jamaluddin berkata, prosedur baharu itu terpakai untuk pengembara memasuki Malaysia melalui program Laluan Perjalanan Lengkap Vaksin (VTL) udara dan darat, Gelembung Pelancongan Antarabangsa Langkawi (LITB) dan Pusat Sejahteraan (OSC) untuk pelawat perniagaan jangka pendek. Beliau berkata, Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM)

Ujian RTK-Ag bagi 3 kategori pengembara digugur mulai esok

menggugurkan keperluan menjalani ujian Covid-19 RT-PCR atau RTK-Ag (profesional) bagi pengembara tiba di Malaysia di bawah program LITB sebelum keluar dari Pulau Langkawi.

Selain itu, Khairy berkata, KKM turut menggugurkan keperluan menjalani ujian kendiri RTK-Ag bagi pengembara umum dari United Kingdom

yang sebelum ini perlu dilakukan setiap hari sepanjang kuarantin.

Katanya keperluan Pegawai Pengiring bagi pelawat perniagaan jangka pendek Lembaga Pembangunan Pelaburan Malaysia (Mida) yang menggunakan kemudahan "OSC" untuk memasuki Malaysia turut digugurkan namun perlu mengikut jadual program terkawal diluluskan Jawatankuasa OSC.



KHAIRY

Putrajaya: Malaysia merekodkan sebanyak 75 kes kematian kelmarin, menjadikan jumlah angka korban di negara ini meningkat kepada 32,749 kes.

Menerusi laman web Covidnow, kes kematian tertinggi dilaporkan di Selangor dengan 22 kes, diikuti

Johor (13) dan Sabah (11). Masing-masing sebanyak tujuh kematian dilaporkan di Kedah dan Perak masing-masing tiga di Kelantan, Melaka dan Pulau Pinang serta dua kes dilaporkan

kan di Terengganu. Turut dilaporkan ialah masing-masing satu kes di Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Sarawak dan Kuala Lumpur. Data itu memaklumkan, daripada jumlah angka ko-

rban itu, ada 20 kes kematian di luar fasiliti kesihatan (BID). Perkembangan itu menjadikan sehingga kini 6,710 kes kematian dilaporkan sebelum bantuan perubatan dapat diberi.

Ekonomi Malaysia konsisten di sebalik cabaran Covid-19, banjir

Cyberjaya: Ekonomi Malaysia terus kekal berdaya tahan serta terus di landasan pemulihan di sebalik cabaran Covid-19 dan bencana banjir baru-baru ini.

Menteri Kewangan Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Aziz berkata, ini jelas apabila Keluaran Dalam Negeri Kasar (KDNK) meningkat sebanyak 3.1 peratus tahun lalu berbanding penguncupan sebanyak 5.6 peratus pada 2020.

Menurutnya, momentum pemulihan ini adalah hasil langkah segera kerajaan melaksanakan pakej bantuan dan rangsangan ekonomi berjumlah RM530 bilion.

Beliau berkata, pakej bantuan itu juga dilengkapi inisiatif Belanjawan 2021, kejayaan Pelan Pemulihan Negara, serta pelaksanaan Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) yang sistematik.

"Pencapaian ini turut disumbang oleh Keluarga Hasil (Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri) dengan jumlah kutipan pada 2021 meningkat sebanyak 17 peratus berbanding 2020 kepada lebih RM140 bilion."

"Prestasi cemerlang ini

adalah kejayaan yang membanggakan kerana hasil kutipan cukai ini menyumbang hampir separuh daripada jumlah pendapatan negara," katanya ketika berucap dalam majlis sambutan Hari Hasil Ke-26 di Menara Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri (LHDN), di sini, semalam.

Turut hadir, Timbalan Menteri Kewangan II Yaman Hafez Musa dan Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif LHDN Datuk Mohd Nizam Sairi.

Sementara itu, Mohd Nizam berkata, LHDN akan terus komited memastikan kedudukan kewangan negara diperkukuh bagi menjamin kelangsungan agenda pembangunan serta membiayai perbelanjaan tadbir urus jentera kerajaan.

"LHDN sedang menggiatkan usaha memberi perkhidmatan percukaian terbaik melalui aktiviti turun padang mendekati pembayar cukai dalam siri libat urus bersama agensi kerajaan, persatuan perniagaan dalam pelbagai industri dan pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO)," katanya.

Tiada lagi perubahan status

Kuala Lumpur: Tiada lagi perubahan status di aplikasi MySejahtera sekiranya orang ramai dikesan sebagai kontak kasual (kuning) kepada kes positif Covid-19, kata Menteri Kesihatan Khairy Jamaluddin.

Khairy menerusi ciapan di Twitter beliau berkata, sebaliknya individu berkenaan hanya akan menerima notifikasi memaklumkan mereka adalah kontak kasual.

"Sebelum ini apabila MySJ trace/check-in mengesan anda sebagai kontak kasual kes positif, status di MySJ akan bertukar kepada kontak kasual (kuning)."

"Kini tiada lagi perubahan status. Tetapi anda akan menerima notifikasi.

jika bergejala, asingkan diri dan lakukan ujian kendiri," katanya.

Khairy turut memuat naik poster mengenai langkah meningkatkan penilaian kendiri Covid-19 Kementerian Kesihatan: Tingkatkan Penilaian Kendiri Covid-19 merangkumi lima peringkat iaitu: 1: Test (Uji), 2: Report (Lapor), 3: Isolate (Asing), 4: Inform (Maklum) dan 5: Seek (Dapatkan rawatan).

Poster berkenaan antaranya menggesa orang ramai mendapatkan rawatan segera di pusat perubatan atau Pusat Penilaian Covid-19 sekiranya alami gejala berat seperti kesukaran bernafas dan suhu badan terlalu tinggi.

Covid-19: 75 kes kematian direkodkan, 20 BID

Daripada jumlah kes BID berkenaan, lapan kes dilaporkan di Sabah, Selangor (lima), masing-masing dua kes di Johor, Kedah, Kelantan dan satu di Kuala Lumpur.

32,749

Jumlah korban direkodkan akibat Covid-19

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 18

RUANGAN : LOKAL

16 PPS khas Covid-19 dibuka

Kuala Terengganu: Sebanyak 16 pusat pemindahan sementara (PPS) khas dibuka di negeri ini bagi menempatkan mangsa banjir disahkan positif Covid-19.

Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Terengganu (JKNT) Datuk Dr Kasemani

Embong berkata, semua PPS khas itu dibuka bermula Khamis lalu turut menempatkan mangsa banjir yang menjadi kontak rapat.

Menurutnya, ia melibatkan empat PPS di Kuala Terengganu; tiga PPS di Kemaman, tiga PPS di Besut

serta masing-masing dua PPS di Dungun, Hulu Terengganu dan Kuala Nerus.

"Setakat ini, terdapat seramai 49 pesakit disahkan positif, manakala 78 lagi adalah kontak rapat yang ditempatkan di semua PPS khas ini," katanya.

Kota Bharu: Sebanyak 11 kes positif Covid-19 dikenal pasti dalam kalangan mangsa banjir di Kelantan setakat kelmarin.

Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Kelantan (JKNK) Datuk Dr Zaini Hussin berkata, daripada 11 kes yang dilaporkan, sebanyak lima kes dikesan melalui saringan kemasukan ke pusat pemindahan sementara (PPS).

11 mangsa bah di Kelantan positif Covid-19

Katanya, manakala enam kes lagi diketahui sebelum mereka berpindah ke PPS.

"Semua kes ini diasingkan daripada mangsa banjir

yang lain iaitu empat kes ditempatkan di Pusat Kuarentin dan Rawatan Covid-19 Berisiko Rendah (PKRC), dua di PPS khas dan lima kes lagi di PPS berlainan blok dengan mangsa banjir lain.

"Setakat ini, tiada kluster membabitkan mangsa banjir di PPS kerana petugas kesihatan akan membuat saringan sebelum mangsa dimasukkan ke PPS," katanya ketika dihubungi, di sini, semalam.

Dr Zaini berkata, bagi mangsa banjir yang mempunyai gejala, pihaknya berharap mereka memaklumkan kepada petugas kesihatan untuk mengelakkan jangkitan Covid-19 kepada orang lain.

Menurutnya, pemberitahuan awal akan memudahkan urusan untuk membuat rawatan dan proses kuarantin seperti yang ditetapkan.

"Kita juga minta mangsa sentiasa menjaga diri dan keluarga masing-masing bagi memastikan mereka sentiasa sihat dan tidak dijangkiti Covid-19," katanya.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : STORY OF THE DAY / NEWS

MORE THAN 400

Education clusters form bulk of active Covid-19 cases

KUALA LUMPUR: Education clusters make up almost two-thirds of active Covid-19 clusters.

Malaysia has detected 643 clusters this year, of which 407 were linked to educational institutions.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said workplace clusters were the second highest (133), followed by high-risk group clusters (49), community clusters (28), imported clusters (12), detention clusters (10) and religious clusters (four).

He said 118 new clusters were reported in epidemiological week seven and the number fell by 40.7 per cent to 70 clusters in epidemiological week eight (Feb 20-26).

He said the number of new education and detention clusters was falling, but high-risk group and community clusters saw a slight rise.

He said the trend for workplace clusters remained the same, at 14 clusters in epidemiological weeks seven and eight.

No imported or religious clusters

were reported in epidemiological weeks seven and eight.

Dr Noor Hisham said most workplace clusters were identified in the manufacturing sector (52), followed by the services sector (41), public sector (30), agricultural sector (five), construction sector (three) and mining and quarry sector (two).

He said from Jan 25, 2020 to Feb 26 this year, 63 per cent of Covid-19 infections (201,281 cases) detected at workplaces involved foreign workers.

He said investigations found that the biggest contributor to workplace clusters was transmission at workplaces (56.8 per cent), followed by workers' hostels (29.08 per cent), kongsi houses (13.38 per cent), other places (0.51 per cent) and rental places (0.23 per cent).

A total of 30,624 patients recovered from Covid-19 on Monday, outnumbering new infections at 23,100 cases.

Most of the new cases were mild — 8,304 cases in Category 1

and 14,610 cases in Category 2.

There were 96 cases in Category 3, 39 in Category 4 and 51 in Category 5.

Of the 186 patients in categories 3, 4 and 5, 84 had completed primary vaccination but did not receive a booster shot, 63 had received booster shots and 39 were unvaccinated or had not completed primary vaccination.

Dr Noor Hisham said 82 patients were 60 years or older, 84 had comorbidities and two cases were pregnant.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NEWS

Ban on tobacco and vape would be ineffective

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A total ban on tobacco and vape products to curb smoking is nothing but "wishful thinking" by the government. While the move will not deter smokers, experts warned that it would hurt poor households, spur illegal trade and result in revenue loss for the country.

The concerns came after Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin recently mooted the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill to prohibit the sale and possession of tobacco and vape products to those born in 2005 or later.

However, experts said that Malaysia should focus on promoting less harmful alternatives for smokers if it intends to become a tobacco-free nation one day.

POORER ONES TO LOSE MORE

Former law minister Datuk Zaid Ibrahim described the ban as "cruel and populist" as it cuts poor households deeper than the richer ones. This, he said, was because smokers generally come from the lower strata of the society.

"Smoking is a small pleasure for the poor masses. Many fishermen in Bachok, Kelantan, smoke to dull the pain of not having a good catch after a long day at sea."

"Padi farmers have to endure the heat and reap the minimal harvest when the season is not in favour of a good crop. Only smoking could relax them a little."

"While this initiative may be a clever way of permanently banning smokers from enjoying their puff for good, it will not prove successful in eliminating smoking. It is just another punishment on those who smoke."

"Today the price of cigarettes is sky-high. It is unaffordable to most smokers, yet it does not stop them from smoking."

"Smokers know cheap tobacco will kill them faster, but they have no choice because they like to smoke," he said, in a Facebook post earlier this year.

Zaid said underprivileged people can only rely on "small pleasures" like smoking, as they cannot own luxury items or afford overseas holidays, like the rich elite.



Dr Carmelo Ferlito



Dr Arifin Fii

"The government should trust people to do what is good for them. There is no need to manage every bit of people's lives. There is no need to go overboard and punish smokers at every turn," he said.

Likewise, economist Dr Carmelo Ferlito pointed out that tobacco taxes were regressive since they pose greater financial burden on poor households.

The Centre for Market Education chief executive officer said this was because nicotine addiction would keep smokers hooked to smoking despite higher taxes.

"A tax hike on cigarettes will only make many poor households even poorer."

"This is because smoking is income-inelastic, meaning that as incomes grow, smoking products consume a much smaller portion of a household's expenditure."

"Greater tax burdens on the poorest households make the purchases of necessities like healthy food, clean water and adequate shelter more difficult."

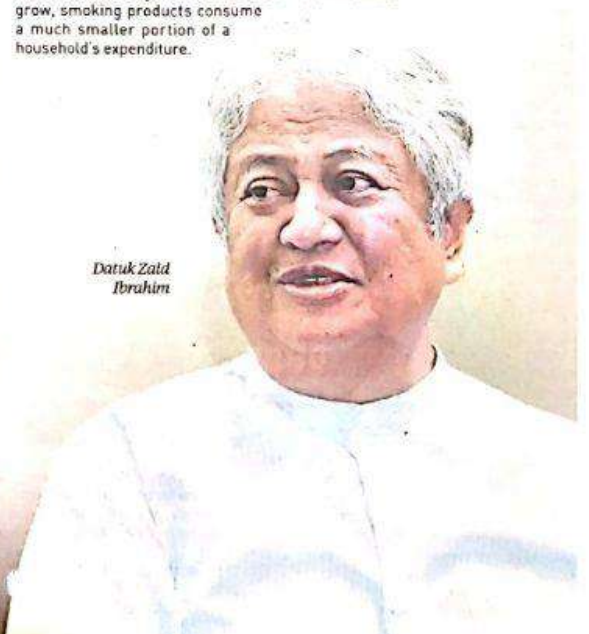
"Some studies have found that working-class consumers in high-income countries opt for cheaper tobacco products to reduce expenditure," he said.

UNLIKELY TO END CONSUMPTION

Banning tobacco products is unlikely to curb consumption, simply because prohibitions cannot break nicotine addiction.

Dr Arifin Fii, a medical practitioner focusing on addiction therapy, said former smokers often relapse and quit intervention programmes within a few months.

Datuk Zaid Ibrahim



AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : NEWS

"It is also important to remember that it is not only nicotine dependence that makes quitting traditional cigarettes difficult."

"For some, smoking offers relief and other psycho-social pleasure. This often makes the physical act of smoking just as difficult to quit as the nicotine smoking provides."

"Although nicotine addiction keeps people smoking, it is the smoke from combustion which releases thousands of harmful constituents into the body at dangerous levels, leading to deaths," he said.

In 2019, former Deputy Health Minister Dr Lee Boon Chye revealed that 73,836 people had participated in smoking cessation programmes over a seven-year period.

Yet, only 16,980 people were able to successfully quit in six months.

By contrast, the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019 estimated that over 27,200 deaths occur due to smoking every year.

Hence, Dr Arifin urged the government to reevaluate existing strategies to decrease tobacco-related morbidity and mortality, that has fallen short from delivering on its goals.

BOON FOR BLACK MARKET

A tobacco ban, Carmelo argued, would do "a great favour" for organised crimes to go mainstream and boost the market share of illegal cigarette trade in Malaysia.

He illustrated this by comparing the proposed tobacco ban with the Prohibition period in the United States (US), during which, the sale and production of alcohol were banned.

"When the Prohibition took effect in the 1920s, mafia groups took over the liquor industry. This led to almost 75 per cent of the country's population resort to start drinking during the ban."

"Alcohol prices skyrocketed and illegal bars started mushrooming. An average of 1,000 people died every

year after drinking tainted liquor. The US government also lost US\$11 billion due to the liquor ban," he said.

R. Paneir Selvam, a senior lecturer at the Institute of Crime and Criminology in HELP University, said Malaysia that also faced a similar predicament.

Many alcohol consumers, he said, turned to bootleg booze after alcohol excise tripled in 2016. The issue drew public attention after 45 people died after drinking contaminated liquor in September 2018.

"Young adults are often tempted to rebel and seek for 'forbidden pleasures'. So, a generational tobacco ban intentionally targets them might actually provoke them to start smoking."

"A ban also enables organised crime gangs to flourish their illegal businesses through mass production of cheaper and harmful counterfeit alternatives."

"In the case of tobacco, contraband cigarettes are already gaining traction in Malaysia, and a ban will further exacerbate this," he said.

Paneir urged the government to introduce new legislation to distinguish vape products from traditional tobacco products.

Regulating the vape industry, he said, would prevent underage vaping and ensure that vape products strictly serve as tools to quit smoking.

"Imposing a ban on tobacco consumption is neither practical nor economically viable in the long run."

"Furthermore, the state should guide consumers to make informed decisions, and not dictate their consumption options," Paneir added.

According to Euromonitor International, Malaysia was the world's largest tobacco market in 2019, with illegal cigarettes making up almost two-third of the country's tobacco market.

The local industry body, Confederation of Malaysian Tobacco Manufacturers, through a study has also stated



R. Paneir Selvam



Ong Kian Ming



Clive Bates

that Malaysia has been losing RM5 billion in tax revenue annually from the sale of illegal cigarettes.

The same study also found that at least six in every 10 cigarettes consumed locally were illicit ones.

Carmelo said further revenue loss is imminent should the Parliament greenlight the generational tobacco ban.

In this regard, Bangi member of parliament Ong Kian Ming said the enforcement aspect will play a key role in determining the proposed bill's fate in the Dewan Rakyat.

Ong asked the Health Ministry to detail out its approach to curb illegal trade in Malaysia, strategies to prevent minors from purchasing cigarettes, and the mechanisms to enforce the generational tobacco ban.

The ministry, he said, should also provide an evaluation on current harm reduction strategies and on the possibility for smokers to shift towards contraband cigarettes, if the bill is passed.

PROMOTE AND REGULATE LESS HARMFUL OPTIONS

Rather than trying to eradicate consumption, Carmelo said, the government should encourage smokers to opt for less harmful consumption options.

"People are entitled to the pleasure that they choose. Our strategy should not be to destroy the pleasure, but rather promote lesser harmful options that offer similar pleasure."

"This can be done through three ways. Firstly, incentivise consumers when they choose less harmful products."

"Secondly, focus solely on decreasing tobacco smoking and reduce restrictions on heated tobacco, e-cigarettes and vaping products."

"Thirdly, welcome, encourage and incentivise innovation of harm-reduction alternatives," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Arifin believed vaping could be a viable solution to phase out smoking.

Multiple studies, he said, have asserted that vape products were far less harmful compared with cigarettes and were more efficient in getting smokers to quit.

"For example, a report by Cochrane Review which reviewed 61 studies involving 16,759 adult smokers, found that more people stopped smoking for at least six months using nicotine vape than using nicotine replacement therapies."

"In New Zealand, which promotes vape as a smoking cessation tool, daily smoking rates have dropped from 16.4 per cent [between 2011 and 2012] to 9.4 per cent in 10 years [between 2020 and 2021]."

Similarly, in the United Kingdom (UK), smoking prevalence has declined since the country encouraged the use of vape to quit smoking. In England, the number of smokers dwindled from 7.7 million people in 2011 to 5.7 million in 2019.

"Another report in June 2021 also

found that nearly two-third of current vapers in UK are ex-smokers [64.6 per cent], and this proportion is expected to grow," he said.

Likewise, international tobacco harm reduction specialist Clive Bates said allowing less harmful smoke-free products to replace cigarettes in the marketplace will bring the greatest and fastest return to public health.

"Smoke-free products do not require the user to quit nicotine but eliminates the toxic burden of smoke."

"They also serve as economic substitutes for cigarettes - which means that measures that increase demand for smoke-free products tend to decrease demand for smoking."

"This will also suppress demand for cigarettes among younger people, as there will be fewer parents and adult role models as smokers," he said.

Bates stressed that the right way to approach the smoking problem is to manage the risks of using nicotine, by adopting risk-proportionate regulations.

"For example, have high taxes on cigarettes but low or no taxes on smoke-free products."

"Ban cigarette advertising, but control advertising for vaping products to restrict themes and placement that appeal to younger people."

"Cigarette packaging and warning should convey significant risk, but the packaging of smoke-free products should encourage switching from smoking," he added.

Bates said Malaysia can still become a smoke-free nation, provided regulators have a clear goal, rather than pursuing naive and simplistic measures that drifts the country further away from its ambition.

Cigarette packaging and warning should convey significant risk, but the packaging of smoke-free products should encourage switching from smoking.



A former law minister says the government should trust people to do what is good for them, and that there is 'no need to go overboard and punish smokers at every turn'.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : NATION

Health DG: Workplace clusters down, thanks to vaxxing

PETALING JAYA: Workplace Covid-19 clusters have been on the downtrend since August last year, when more than half of Malaysians had been fully vaccinated, Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said.

The workplace made up more than half of the 6,774 clusters reported since the start of the pandemic.

The vaccination drive in Malaysia began on Feb 24 last year and by

August, more than 55% of Malaysians had received two doses.

Dr Noor Hisham said the highest number of workplace clusters was reported from Aug 15-21, 2021, but it started declining a month later.

"This is in line with the success of the vaccination programme, although there was movement of people during this recovery phase," he said in a statement yesterday.

He said a total of 542,296 cases

were reported from the 6,774 clusters identified between Jan 25, 2020, when the first case was reported, and last Saturday.

Of that, 6,280 clusters have ended while 494 are still active.

Workplaces accounted for 3,494 clusters or 58.46% of the total clusters reported in that period, followed by community (20.41%), detention centres (7.62%) and education (7.22%).

Religious activities, high-risk and imported clusters made up the remaining 6.35%.

"A total of 201,281 or 63% of the overall cases from the workplace clusters involved non-citizens," Dr Noor Hisham said.

He said these clusters were identified in the manufacturing, services, public administration, agriculture, construction and mining and quarrying sub-sectors.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NATION

Parents get exam jitters, too

Many fear children might get Covid-19 infection while sitting for SPM

By LIEW JIA XIAN
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GEORGE TOWN: Before the pandemic, it was mostly about getting the As.

Now, parents of the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) candidates are dreading that along with the As, is the possibility that their children may contract Covid-19.

Voicing his concerns over the current situation is T.C. Beh who said: "What will happen if one of the students comes down with Covid-19 during the examination?"

"The rest of the students at the same examination hall would then be considered close or casual contacts, and would be required to be quarantined at home."

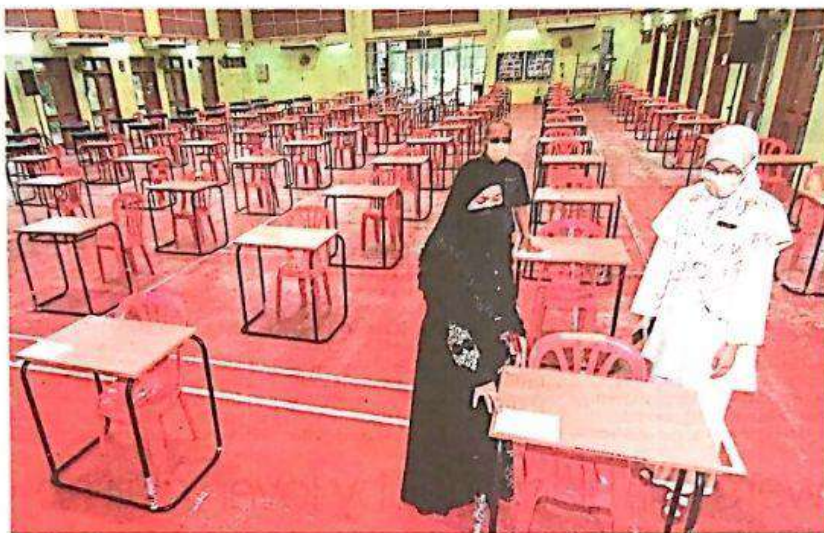
"What will happen then? Can they resit the papers at a later date?" he said.

According to the standard operating procedure (SOP) for SPM candidates, the school administrators should contact the district Health Office (PKD) for advice and further action should school-based students show symptoms.

The school must also inform the students' parents or guardians. The candidates also need to be placed in special examination rooms and don face masks.

The chief invigilator must ensure the candidates have no contact with any other students or school staff until the PKD officer arrives at the examination centre.

If the officer allows the candidates who show symptoms to sit for the examination, the chief invigilator



Examination hall: SMK Agama Lati staff double-checking SPM candidate slips in Pasir Mas, Kelantan. — Bernama

must ensure the examination invigilators are provided with face masks, disposable gloves and hand sanitiser.

Tables must be arranged in such a way that each table is at least 2m from the adjacent ones.

The candidates' answer slips must be placed in transparent envelopes provided. A disinfection process is carried out before packing.

The special examination rooms must be disinfected at the end of the examination session on a daily basis.

Annie Choong, 50, said she was worried for her daughter, Erin, who is sitting for her SPM that begins today.

"What happens if a student gets Covid-19, or is flagged as a close contact during exam days?"

"Will the student be prevented from taking the exam? What are the contingency plans and options for the students to take the exam on another day?" she said, adding that her daughter will be tested on 10 subjects.

Choong will prepare meals from home for her daughter to take to school.

"She has stopped eating canteen

food ever since the school implemented the no dine-in SOP at the canteen."

"Attendance in school has been low lately because many students prefer to study at home to prepare for SPM," she said.

Victor Tan, 55, has always reminded his son to be extra careful.

"My son and his friends have been going to school for a few months already."

"I always advise him to strictly follow the SOP as I don't want him to catch the virus, especially during the exam period."

"My son also does not want to be infected and miss the exam. He will be taking nine subjects for SPM."

"If they are unable to take the exam in March due to Covid-19, then there will be a special sitting in April for students to retake the exam."

"Although I am worried about his health, I understand that he can complete his SPM as soon as possible as it has been dragging on for quite some time," said the business owner.

St Xavier's Institution principal Goh Hong Peng said the school was ready for exam students, with all arrangements compliant with Education Ministry requirements.

A total of 407,097 candidates will be sitting for the written SPM 2021 examination from today to March 29 under the watch of 50,514 invigilators at 3,382 examination centres nationwide.

The examination timetable is available at www.lp.moe.gov.my.

ICU bed usage over 50% in eight states

PETALING JAYA: The occupancy rate of intensive care unit (ICU) beds for Covid-19 patients has exceeded 50% in eight states and federal territories, says Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

They are Kelantan (70%), Putrajaya (67%), Kuala Lumpur (65%), Johor (63%), Melaka (61%), Perak (58%), Perlis (55%) and Sabah (53%).

As for non-ICU beds, 12 states and federal territories have more than 50% of their capacity filled.

They are Selangor (106%), Kuala Lumpur (91%), Perak (91%), Putrajaya (84%), Melaka (84%), Perlis (78%), Pahang (69%), Johor (68%), Terengganu (60%), Sabah (60%), Penang (57%) and Sarawak (55%).

Melaka is the only state to see more than half of the beds at low-risk quarantine centres (PKRC) taken up, at 57%.

"All states are prepared with a quick action plan in the event there is a surge in cases which requires admissions to PKRC, hospitals or ICUs," Dr Noor Hisham said in a statement yesterday.

There were 1,555 hospital admis-

sions on Feb 28, of which 592 cases or 38.1% were in Categories Three, Four and Five, while 61.9% or 963 patients were in Categories One and Two.

Malaysia reported 23,100 new Covid-19 infections on Monday, which is a dip from the previous day's count of 24,466.

A total of 298 of the new cases are imported, while 22,802 are from local transmissions.

Meanwhile, 361 patients are currently warded at ICUs and 193 are being given respiratory assistance.

Recoveries outnumbered new cases on Monday as 30,624 people recovered from Covid-19, bringing the total number of recoveries to 3,116,564.

Dr Noor Hisham said 105 cases or 0.43% of the daily count were in advanced stages of infection in Categories Three, Four and Five.

The bulk of the cases (22,914 infections) were asymptomatic (Category One) or mildly symptomatic (Category Two).

Three new clusters were also detected, which brings the total number of active clusters to 480, he added.

Management procedure for positive cases and close contacts to Covid-19 cases according to vaccination status

Effective March 1, 2022

POSITIVE CASE



Note: Quarantine period is regardless of whether the patient is asymptomatic or symptomatic

CLOSE CONTACTS

Vaccination status	Asymptomatic/Symptomatic	Quarantine period	Test requirement
Boosted	Asymptomatic	No quarantine	RTK(Ag) self-test on Day 1 and Day 3
	Symptomatic	5 days	RTK(Ag) on Day 5. Release on Day 5 if NEGATIVE
Fully vaccinated	Asymptomatic or Symptomatic	5 days	RTK(Ag) on Day 5. Release on Day 5 if NEGATIVE
Partially vaccinated or unvaccinated	Asymptomatic or Symptomatic	7 days	RTK(Ag) on Day 7. Release on Day 7 if NEGATIVE

Note: Fully vaccinated close contact individuals who had Covid-19 infection within the last 60 days do not have to quarantine

Source: Ministry of Health

TheStar graphics

Khairy: It won't turn 'yellow'

KUALA LUMPUR: Casual contacts of Covid-19 will not see any change in their status on MySejahtera, but they will be notified via the application, says Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

"Those who are found to have been in contact with positive cases will only receive a notification informing them that they are casual contacts. Prior to this, when the MySJ trace/check-in detects anyone as a casual contact of a positive case, the status on their MySJ will change to yellow."

"Now there is no change in the colour anymore, but the person will receive a notification. For those who have symptoms, isolate yourself and do the self-test," he said in a Twitter posting.

Khairy also uploaded a poster on measures to improve Covid-19 self-assessment, which comprises five stages, namely Test, Report, Isolate, Inform and Seek, as well as one bit of advice for the public – seek immediate treatment at health centres or the Covid-19 Assessment Centre should they have symptoms like difficulty in breathing and high body temperature. — Bernama

AKHBAR : THE SUN ON WEDNESDAY

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

School holiday plans put on hold

Hotels, theme parks suffer as parents shelve term break activities due to Omicron fears

BY MUHAMMAD YUSRY
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The Omicron wave has put a damper on the holiday plans of families with children.

The expected rise in hotel bookings and visits to theme parks did not materialise as parents put on hold their vacation plans for the first-term school holidays from Feb 26 to March 22.

Families are exercising caution as the Omicron variant took daily new infections to a new peak on Feb 25, with 32,070 cases.

Malaysian Association of Hotels chief executive officer Yap Lip Seng said the cancellations were for events

and group travels, adding that many were unable to travel either due to being tested positive or identified as close contacts.

"These cancellations are a threat to the recovery of the hotel industry, and hotels will not be able to restore their operations, causing further delay to recovery," Yap said.

He called for less focus on the number of cases daily and more on educating the public on managing Covid-19 as Malaysia should be in a transition into an endemic phase.

"The public needs to be empowered with knowledge and the ability to self-regulate from proper identification, disclosure, reporting, isolation guidelines and access to

recommended treatments," he said.

"Bear in mind that the Omicron variant will not be the last and there could be others in future, but it should not derail the transition to the endemic phase. The upcoming change to quarantine procedures for positive cases and close contacts is a positive move."

Yap said hotel industry stakeholders are committed to continue with the highest standards in hygiene and safety management, to drive confidence in travelling.

"Based on our information, the domestic market for the hotel industry stands at approximately 55% while international was at 45%."

"Without international arrivals, the industry is not expected to exceed an average occupancy of 50%, along with a much lower average room rate due to the lower spending power of locals. The industry players will still need to maintain current cost

management initiatives, including sustaining manpower controls."

Malaysian Association of Theme Parks and Family Attraction president Tan Sri Richard Koh said theme parks and family attractions businesses were adversely affected as visitor numbers were down by as much as 60%.

Although the country is in the school holiday period, customers are cancelling bookings and confirmed events have been postponed.

"It is made worse without foreign tourists. Some theme parks experienced a 50% downturn since the second week of CNY," Koh said, adding that the setback is serious as the industry is still in the midst of recovering from the pandemic.

"Cancellations and no bookings will definitely hit our revenue as we have just started to key up the business with full-scale hirings and lower yield pricing to attract local

visitors. Events make up 20 to 30% of visitors and revenue for the parks, including in park spending that presently cannot be achieved to cover overall costs."

Koh said all theme parks enforce strict standard operating procedures for safety against Covid-19, so the public should not be fearful of visiting theme parks and attractions.

"Our safety standards are just below the aviation and maritime standards and our vast outdoor spaces enable social distancing."

"Theme parks are safer to visit compared with most public places as we pride ourselves in safety, the ability to control crowds, vast land areas for large capacity of visitors and the ability to enforce social distancing, with a regulated number of people enjoying the rides or the pools at any one time, including having dedicated staff constantly monitoring the situation," he added.

Six-day Covid test rule for travellers scrapped

KUALA LUMPUR: Travellers arriving in Malaysia from abroad through various programmes will not be required to undergo the six-day Covid-19 test regimen effective tomorrow.

In a statement yesterday, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the new procedure applied to travellers entering Malaysia via the air and land Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) programme between Malaysia and Singapore, Langkawi International Tourism Bubble (LITB) and One Stop Centre (OSC) for short-term business visitors.

The Health Ministry dropped the requirement to undergo the Covid-19 RTK-Ag test on the second, fourth and sixth day

for travellers arriving in Malaysia under the three options.

He said the ministry also dropped the requirement to undergo the Covid-19 RTK-PCR or RTK-Ag (professional) test for travellers arriving in Malaysia under the LITB programme before leaving Langkawi.

Apart from that, Khairy said the ministry also dropped the rule to undergo RTK-Ag self-testing for travellers arriving from the UK, which previously had to be done daily during the quarantine period.

Khairy said that also lifted was the need for a liaison officer for short-term business travellers under the Malaysian Investment Development Authority who use OSC

facilities to enter Malaysia.

"However, they need to follow the controlled itinerary that is issued and approved by the OSC committee," he said.

"The Covid-19 test, which needs to be conducted two days before departure to Malaysia and upon arrival in Malaysia, is still maintained as per the existing protocol."

"I would like to emphasise once again that this new procedure only applies to travellers who enter Malaysia through the VTL, LITB and OSC programmes," he said.

Khairy added that for travellers who do not enter Malaysia through the three programmes, existing SOP and protocols will still apply. - Bernama



Casual contacts will no longer see a change in the MySejahtera app display, but will receive a notification. - SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN/THESUN

No status change in MySejahtera app for casual contacts

KUALA LUMPUR: Individuals flagged as "casual contacts" will not see any change in their status on the MySejahtera app but will be notified via the application, said Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

In a post on Twitter yesterday, he said those who are traced to have been in contact with Covid-19 positive cases would only receive a notification informing them that

there are casual contacts.

"Prior to this, when the MySj trace/check-in detects anyone as a casual contact of a positive case, the status on their MySj will change to yellow (for casual contact)."

"Now, there is no change in the colour (to yellow) anymore, but the person will receive a notification. For those who have symptoms, isolate yourself and do the self-test," he said.

Khairy also uploaded a poster on measures to improve Covid-19 self-assessment, which comprises five stages, namely Test, Report, Isolate, Inform and Seek, and advice for the public to seek immediate treatment at health centres or Covid-19 assessment centres should they have symptoms, like difficulty in breathing and high body temperature. - Bernama

67.2 million vaccine doses administered

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 879,264 (24.8%) children aged between five and 11 in Malaysia have received their first dose of vaccine under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) as of Monday.

According to the CovidNOW website, 14,660,956 (62.3%) of the adult population have received the booster dose, 22,949,368 (97.5%) have completed their vaccination and 23,229,321 (98.7%) have received at least one jab.

For adolescents aged 12 to 17, 2,801,180 (90%) have completed their vaccination, while 2,896,290 (93.1%) have received at least one dose.

On Monday, 115,202 doses were administered, comprising 34,200 first-doses, 1,259 second-doses and 79,743 booster jabs, bringing the total given out under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (PICK) to 67,208,978 doses.

Meanwhile, according to the Health Ministry Github portal, 75 cases of Covid-19 deaths were recorded on Monday, with Selangor registering 22 fatalities, followed by 13 in Johor, 11 in Sabah and seven each in Perak and Kedah.

Penang, Kelantan and Malacca had three deaths each, followed by Terengganu with two, and Negri Sembilan, Pahang, Sarawak and Kuala Lumpur with one each. - Bernama