

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Kaji domain peranti perubatan berpotensi tinggi

Putrajaya: Malaysia perlu membuat kajian dan penyelidikan dalam bidang yang belum diteroka, termasuk membabitkan domain peranti perubatan yang juga berpotensi tinggi untuk dijayakan.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata antara bidang yang boleh dikaji adalah inisiatif atau penyelidikan membabitkan pembangunan Aplikasi Perubatan atau Kesihatan, Rekaan Robotik untuk pembedahan dan prosedur perubatan lain.

Selain itu, beliau berkata, kajian dan penyelidikan boleh dilakukan membabitkan program berasaskan kecerdasan buatan (AI), kit ujian atau biosensor untuk tujuan diagnostik yang bernilai tinggi dan mempunyai peluang luas untuk diteroka lebih lanjut.

"Intervensi Kajian Klinik dalam bidang Perubatan Regeneratif dan Herba (TCM) adalah dua bidang lain yang mempunyai potensi besar untuk kita terokai selanjutnya.

"Satu lagi strategi menuju ke hadapan untuk mengembangkan keupayaan dan daya tarikan negara menjalankan lebih banyak ujian klinikal fasa 1 ialah dengan mengenal pasti serta membabitkan diaspora Malaysia pada peringkat global dan membina kerjasama untuk manfaat bersama serta program latihan pascasiswazah," katanya ketika melancarkan Laporan Tahunan Clinical Research Malaysia (CRM) 2021 dan pembentangan Laporan Projek Realisasi Fasa 1 (PIRP), di sini, semalam.

Khairy berkata, Malaysia mencatat pencapaian terbaik dalam penyelidikan klinikal tahun lalu melalui 215 penyelidikan klinikal tajaan yang dijalankan, membabitkan rawatan penyelidikan dalam bidang penyakit berjangkit, onkologi, hematologi dan kardiologi.

Katanya, separuh daripada kajian ini dijalankan di hospital dan klinik kesihatan bawah Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM), manakala selebihnya di hospital universiti dan pusat perubatan swasta.

Khairy berkata, jumlah penyelidikan ditaja itu diterjemahkan kepada nilai pelaburan tahunan tertinggi sumber daripada kajian klinikal, dengan RM226 juta dijana.

Katanya, ia menyumbang kepada RM834 juta jumlah Pendapatan Negara Kasar sejak 2012.

"Malaysia buat kali pertama juga meningkatkan kedudukan ke tempat kedua dalam rantau Asia Tenggara selepas Singapura, dalam bilangan kajian klinikal global tajaan industri," katanya.

Penularan COVID-19

KKM, SPR teliti protokol pengundian selamat

Hak pengundi positif memilih pada pilihan raya tidak boleh dinafikan

Oleh Rafidah Mat Ruzki
fidahruzki@bh.com.my

Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) sedang berbincang dengan Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya (SPR) bagi menyediakan satu protokol pengundian yang selamat membabitkan pemilih yang positif COVID-19 pada hari pengundian pada pilihan raya akan datang.

Menterinya, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata ia bagi membolehkan pengundi yang positif menjalankan tanggungjawab mereka pada pilihan raya.

Beliau berkata, semua pihak perlu menerima hakikat bahawa penularan COVID-19 akan kekal, justeru hak pengundi tidak sepatutnya dinafikan.

Katanya, apa yang berlaku membabitkan seorang pengundi di Pilihan Raya Negeri (PRN) Johor, yang tidak dibenarkan mengundi, boleh difahami kerana belum ada protokol selamat yang disiapkan.

"Tetapi saya katakan kepada pegawai saya, COVID-19 akan kekal. Kalau kita nafikan hak



Khairy (tengah) bersama Dr Noor Hisham (dua dari kiri) melancarkan Laporan Tahunan CRM 2021 dan pembentangan Laporan PIRP di Putrajaya, semalam.

(Foto Asyraf Hamzah/BH)

mereka untuk mengundi, bermakna kita terus menafikan hak untuk berpelembagaan.

"Jadi, kita sedang memikirkan apakah cara paling selamat untuk mereka mengundi," katanya kepada pemberita selepas melancarkan Laporan Tahunan Clinical Research Malaysia (CRM) 2021 dan pembentangan Laporan Projek Realisasi Fasa 1 (PIRP), di sini, semalam.

Yang turut hadir, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

Khairy berkata, ada pihak mencadangkan supaya pengundi yang positif COVID-19 dibenarkan mengundi secara undi pos, namun ia sukar dilakukan jika mereka disahkan dijangkiti dua tiga hari sebelum hari mengundi.

Selain itu, katanya, perincian

mengenai siapa yang akan membawa pesakit ke tempat pengundian serta saluran yang akan digunakan perlu juga disediakan.

"Adakah kita akan ada saluran yang khusus untuk pesakit positif COVID-19? Benda ini akan membabitkan masa sedikit. Bukan saya kata mahu menunda atau apa, tetapi pertimbangan politik adalah satu perkara.

"Saya sebagai ahli UMNO, saya faham pertimbangan politik tapi kita juga berada dalam kerajaan, justeru kita perlu memikirkan soal lain juga," katanya.

Ditanya mengenai cadangan pakar kesihatan supaya PRU-15 diadakan seawal tiga bulan selepas pembukaan semula sempadan negara serta lebih banyak ke-longgaran bermula pada 1 April ini, Khairy berkata, ketika ini,

semua pihak tidak mengetahui ke mana hala tuju virus SARS-CoV-2 kerana jika ia merebak dengan pantas, kemungkinan untuk ia bermutasi lebih tinggi dan mewujudkan varian baharu.

Katanya, KKM ketika ini sedang melihat kesan sub varian BA.2 Omicron terhadap keparahan dan gejala yang buruk.

"Sangat awal untuk kita buat rumusan ke arah mana pandemik ini akan pergi dalam tempoh tiga hingga enam bulan. Yang pasti, kita kena adakan PRU-15, jadi kita kena lihat (waktu) paling sesuai.

"Kita kena lihat masa risiko paling rendah untuk kita adakan PRU-15 kerana kita tahu proses PRU membabitkan orang ramai keluar berkempenn dan mengundi," katanya.

Omicron jadi varian utama ganti Delta

Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) mengesahkan Omicron sudah mula menggantikan Delta sebagai varian utama yang menular dalam kalangan penduduk Malaysia.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata ia berdasarkan kajian dan surveilans genomik berterusan dijalankan pihaknya, selain beberapa institusi dan pusat kajian universiti dalam negara.

Antaranya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Medical Molecular Biology Institute (UMBI-UKM), Integrative Pharmacogenomics Institute di Universiti Teknologi MARA (iPROMISE-UITM), Tropical Infectious Diseases Research and Education Centre (TIDREC-UM), Malaysia Genome and Vac-

cine Institute (MGVI) dan Institute of Health and Community Medicine, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (IHCM-UNIMAS).

Ia turut membabitkan Hospital Pengajar Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (HUSM), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UAIM) dan Institut Penyelidikan Perubatan (IMR) di KKM.

"Untuk makluman, varian yang dibimbangi (VOC) Omicron terbahagi kepada tiga sub keturunan iaitu BA.1, BA.1.1, dan BA.2. Sehingga 20 Mac 2022, belum ada laporan mengenai kewujudan satu lagi sub keturunan iaitu BA.3 di Malaysia.

"Kebimbangan terhadap BA.2 kerana ia berkemungkinan mengakibatkan transmisi lebih

tinggi berbanding sub keturunan Omicron lain serta varian Delta. Jangkitan akibat sub keturunan Omicron BA.1.1 dan BA.2 didapati meningkat, masing-masing kepada 40 peratus dan 27.1 peratus pada 1 hingga 17 Mac lalu," katanya dalam kenyataan media, semalam.

Beliau berkata, KKM mengjangkakan besar kemungkinan varian Omicron sub keturunan BA.2 kelak akan menjadi varian dominan di Malaysia, seperti di Denmark, India dan Nepal.

Justeru, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, penduduk Malaysia perlu berwaspada dengan peningkatan penularan varian Omicron BA.2 dan pada masa sama berwaspada dengan penularan berpanjangan varian Delta yang berupaya mengakibatkan jangkitan lebih serius kepada mereka yang tidak

divaksinasi atau tidak menerima vaksin dos penggalak.

Selain itu, beliau berkata, vaksin dos penggalak dapat meningkatkan tahap antibodi meneutralkan (NAb) terhadap BA.1 atau BA.2, melindungi mereka daripada kesan yang serius serta mengelakkan kemasukan ke hospital atau ke unit penjagaan rapi (ICU).

NAB adalah antibodi yang bertanggungjawab mempertahankan sel daripada organisma yang menyebabkan penyakit. Ia terbentuk sama ada melalui vaksinasi atau tindak balas tubuh terhadap jangkitan terdahulu.

Sementara itu, beliau berkata, sehingga kini 65.7 peratus populasi dewasa sudah menerima dos penggalak dan hanya 35.3 peratus kanak-kanak berusia lima tahun hingga 11 tahun menerima suntikan vaksin COVID-19.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : COVID-19

Oleh Rafidah Mat Ruzki
am@hmetro.com.my

Putrajaya

Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) melaporkan 71 kes kematian akibat Covid-19 direkodkan kelmarin termasuk 26 kes kematian di luar fasiliti kesihatan (BID).

Menurut laman sesawang Covidnow, 34,400 kematian akibat Covid-19 dilaporkan di negara ini dengan 7,225 kes BID sejak Covid-19 melanda negara ini.

Dua negeri melaporkan kes kematian tertinggi kelmarin adalah Kedah (lima kes BID) dan Perak (empat kes BID).

Ia disusuli dengan Johor dengan 11 kes kematian akibat Covid-19 termasuk dua kes BID, Selangor (tujuh kes dengan satu BID), masing-masing lima kes di Kelantan (semuanya kes BID), Pulau Pinang (tiga kes BID) dan Sarawak (dua kes BID).

Negeri Sembilan melaporkan empat kes kematian termasuk satu kes BID, masing-masing dua kematian di Terengganu dan Kuala Lumpur (kedua-dua-

7,225

Jumlah kes BID dilaporkan di negara ini sejak Covid-19 melanda



71 KES KEMATIAN BAHARU KELMARIN

26 meninggal di luar kemudahan kesihatan

DUA negeri yang melaporkan kes kematian tertinggi kelmarin adalah Kedah dan Perak. - Ganibar NSTP/EFFENDY RASHID

nya kes BID), dan masing-masing satu kes kematian di Melaka (satu kes BID) dan Pahang.

Sementara itu, 34,970 dos vaksin Covid-19 diberikan kelmarin dengan 17,699 adalah dos penggalak.

Sebanyak 16,078 dos pertama juga diberi kelmarin manakala baki 1,193 adalah dos kedua.

Daripada jumlah itu, 14,902 dos untuk populasi berusia lima hingga 11, 1,291 untuk remaja berusia 12

hingga 17 manakala populasi dewasa menerima sebanyak 18,777 dos termasuk dos penggalak.

Kes baharu turun kepada 19,015 kelmarin

Kuala Lumpur: Kes harian Covid-19 di negara ini terus mencatatkan penurunan apabila 19,105 kes dilaporkan kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, perkembangan itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif individu dijangkiti virus berkenaan 3,993,124 kes.

Beliau berkata, jumlah kes membabitkan 18,719 kes penularan tempatan dengan 386 kes import yang mendapat jangkitan luar negara.

"Paling tinggi kategori dikesan semalam (kelmarin) kategori dua iaitu



Paling tinggi kategori dikesan semalam (kelmarin) kategori dua iaitu 10,645 kes atau 55.72 peratus"

Dr Noor Hisham

10,645 kes atau 55.72 peratus, ia diikuti kategori satu (8,267), kategori tiga (81), kategori empat (44 kes) dan 68 kes bagi kategori lima.

"Daripada jumlah keseluruhan 193 kes bagi kategori tiga hingga lima, 58 kes (30.05 peratus) tidak di-

vaksinasi atau belum lengkap divaksinasi manakala 78 kes (40.41 peratus) menerima dua dos vaksin Covid-19 tetapi belum menerima dos penggalak," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, 57 kes (29.53 peratus) menerima dos penggalak dan 92 kes (47.67 peratus) berusia 60 tahun ke atas manakala 81 kes lagi (41.97 peratus) mempunyai komorbid.

Menurutnya, 371 kes dirawat di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) iaitu 158 kes disahkan Covid-19 manakala 213 kes lagi disyaki, berkemungkinan dan dalam siasatan.

"Bagi pesakit dalam ICU dan memerlukan alat bantuan pernafasan, setakat ini ada 203 kes iaitu 95 kes disahkan Covid-19 serta 108 kes lagi disyaki, berkemungkinan dan dalam siasatan.

"Sebanyak 28,250 kes sembuh dilaporkan menjadikan jumlah kumulatif adalah 3,684,665 kes," katanya.

Dalam pada itu, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, ada satu kluster baru dikesan dan 304 masih aktif.

"Ia menjadikan jumlah kluster 6,912 kluster dan 6,608 kluster sudah tamat," katanya.

94.6% remaja lengkap vaksinasi

Kuala Lumpur: Sebanyak 1,263,287 individu atau 35.6 peratus populasi kanak-kanak berusia lima hingga 11 tahun di Malaysia sudah menerima dos pertama vaksin Covid-19 menerusi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan Kanak-Kanak (PICKids) setakat kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data menerusi laman web Covidnow, bagi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun, 2,843,805 individu atau 94.6 peratus daripada kumpulan itu melengkapkan vaksin mereka manakala 2,942,399 atau 94.6 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi dewasa, 15,483,571 individu atau 65.8 peratus daripada kumpulan itu menerima dos penggalak Covid-19 dan 22,943,182 individu atau 97.5 peratus lengkap vaksinasi manakala 23,219,105 atau 98.7 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Sebanyak 27,330 dos vaksin diberi kelmarin melibatkan 9,849 suntikan pertama, 1,116 suntikan lengkap dan 16,365 suntikan dos penggalak menjadikan kumulatif pemberian vaksin menerusi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) meningkat kepada 68,484,635 dos.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : COVID-19

Oleh Suraya Roslan
suraya@hmetro.com.my

Kuala Lumpur

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) mengesahkan varian Omicron menggantikan Delta sebagai varian utama yang menular dalam kalangan penduduk Malaysia.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, ia berdasarkan kajian dan surveilans genomik berterusan yang dijalankan oleh Institut Biologi Molekul Perubatan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) dan Integrative Pharmacogenomics Institute, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UITM).

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, ia turut dibantu Tropical Infectious Diseases Research & Education Centre Universiti Malaya (UM), Institut Genom dan Vaksin Malaysia, Institut Penyelidikan Per-

OMICRON GANTI DELTA

BA.2 bakal dominan

batan, Institut Kesihatan dan Komuniti Perubatan Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Hospital Pengajar Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) dan Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia-Kuantan.

"Untuk makluman, varian membimbangkan (VOC) Omicron terbahagi kepada tiga sublineage iaitu BA.1, BA.1.1, dan BA.2.

"Sehingga semalam (kemarin), masih belum ada laporan mengenai kewujudan satu lagi sublineage iaitu BA.3 di Malaysia," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, kebimbangan terhadap sub-

lineage BA.2 adalah kerana ia berkemungkinan mengakibatkan transmisi yang lebih tinggi berbanding dengan sublineage Omicron yang lain serta varian Delta.

"Di antara tiga sublineage varian Omicron yang menular, jumlah pelaporan sublineage BA.1.1 dan BA.2 dilihat semakin meningkat.

"Omicron sublineage BA.1.1 meningkat daripada 38.3 peratus pada Januari lalu kepada 48.7 peratus pada Februari namun menurun kepada 40 peratus pada bulan ini.

"Bagi tempoh yang sama (1 Mac hingga 17 Mac), didapati varian Omicron BA.2 meningkat kepada 27.1 peratus berbanding pada Ja-

nuari dan Februari di mana pelaporan untuk varian Omicron sublineage BA.2 hanyalah masing-masing 0.9 peratus dan 2.7 peratus," katanya.

Menurutnya, kenaikan mendadak sublineage BA.2 ini adalah satu perkara yang perlu diambil perhatian.

"Situasi yang sama juga dilihat di beberapa negara seperti Denmark, India, dan Nepal yang melaporkan varian utama virus SAR-CoV2 yang menular di negara mereka adalah varian Omicron sublineage BA.2.

"KKM menjangkakan besar kemungkinan varian Omicron sublineage BA.2 kelak akan menjadi varian yang dominan di Malaysia."

katanya.

Menurutnya, penduduk Malaysia perlu berwaspada dengan peningkatan penularan varian Omicron BA.2 dan pada masa sama pihaknya juga perlu khuatir dengan penularan berpanjangan varian Delta yang diketahui berupaya mengakibatkan jangkitan yang lebih serius terutama dalam kalangan mereka yang tidak divaksinasi atau tidak menerima vaksin dos penggalak.

"Meneutralkan Antibodi (NAb) adalah

antibodi yang bertanggungjawab untuk mempertahankan sel daripada organisma yang menyebabkan penyakit iaitu terbentuk sama ada melalui vaksinasi atau tindak balas tubuh terhadap jangkitan terdahulu.

"Dapatan kajian oleh Jingyou Yu et. al (2022) menyarankan dos penggalak adalah disyorkan untuk meningkatkan tahap NAb yang lebih tinggi dan konsisten terhadap BA.1 atau BA.2," katanya.

"Omicron terbahagi kepada tiga 'sublineage' iaitu BA.1, BA.1.1, dan BA.2."
Dr Noor Hisham



Semoga cepat sembuh



PESAKIT COVID-19 tahap 3 dan 4 dirawat di Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL). - Gambar NSTP/EFFENDY RASHID.

81.9% populasi dewasa terima dos penggalak

Shah Alam: Seramai 3,728,125 golongan dewasa di Selangor direkodkan sudah menerima dos penggalak sehingga 1 Mac lalu menerusi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick).

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Tetap Kesihatan Awam Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud berkata, jumlah itu bersamaan 81.9 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di Selangor.

"Pick yang meliputi golongan dewasa, remaja dan kanak-kanak berumur lima hingga 11 tahun di Selangor ini selari dengan pelaksanaan program di peringkat kebangsaan.

"Statistik menunjukkan 4,334,507 golongan dewasa bersama 95.2 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di Selangor menerima dos pertama.

"Sejumlah 4,315,186 atau 94.8 peratus daripada populasi dewasa sudah menerima dos kedua, manakala 3,728,125 dewasa sudah lengkap dos penggalak," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian menjawab pertanyaan mulut Datuk Dr Ahmad Yunus Hairi (Pas - Sijangkang) pada Persidangan Dewan Undangan Negeri (Dun) Selangor, semalam.

Dr Siti Mariah berkata, bagi golongan remaja pula, sejumlah 531,193

bersamaan 93.3 peratus daripada populasi remaja di Selangor menerima dos pertama.

"Statistik juga menunjukkan 482,503 atau 84.8 peratus daripada populasi remaja di negeri ini menerima dos kedua," katanya.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
 MUKA SURAT : 11
 RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT

Protokol pesakit Covid-19 mengundi

KKM dan SPR
 berbincang bagi
 membolehkan pesakit
 Covid-19 mengundi
 pada pilihan raya

Oleh MOHAMMAD KHAIRIL
 ASHRAF MOHD KHALID

PUTRAJAYA

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) sedang berbincang dengan Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya (SPR) mengenai protokol paling selamat bagi membolehkan pesakit positif Covid-19 mengundi pada pilihan raya.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar berkata, semua pihak perlu menerima hakikat bahawa Covid-19 kekal selama-lamanya dan hak mengundi tidak boleh dinafikan.

"Saya dah cakap dengan pegawai saya bahawa Covid-19 akan berada bersama kita."

"Kalau kita nafikan hak mereka untuk mengundi, kita menafikan hak berperlembagaan. Jadi, kita sedang memikirkan apa cara selamat bagi membolehkan mereka mengundi dan di mana," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian ke-



Khairy (tiga dari kiri) melancarkan Majlis Pelancaran Laporan Tahunan Clinical Research Malaysia (CRM) dan Laporan Projek Realisasi Fasa 1 (PIRP) pada Isnin.

pada pemberita selepas Majlis Pelancaran Laporan Tahunan Clinical Research Malaysia (CRM) dan Laporan Projek Realisasi Fasa 1 (PIRP) pada Isnin.

Sewaktu Pilihan Raya Negeri (PRN) Johor baru-baru ini, seorang pengundi di kawasan Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) Larkin dikenakan kompaun RM1,000 kerana hadir ke pusat mengundi Dewan Kampung Melayu Majidee walaupun dalam tempoh kuarantin selepas dijangkiti Covid-19.

Khairy berkata, protokol bagi membolehkan pesakit positif Covid-19 mengundi akan melibatkan lebih masa.

"Ada yang kata beri mereka (pesakit positif Covid-19) untuk

undi pos. Tetapi katalah dia dijangkiti Covid-19 sehari atau dua hari sebelum, macam mana nak undi pos?"

"Kalau dia nak pergi pun, siapa yang akan bawa mereka? Saluran mana? Adakah kita akan adakan saluran khusus pesakit positif Covid-19," jelasnya.

Khairy menegaskan, pihaknya bukan mahu menunda isu tersebut tetapi yang utama adalah keselamatan orang awam.

Dalam pada itu, bagi mengadakan Pilihan Raya Umum ke-15 (PRU15), Khairy menyatakan perlu mencari masa sesuai atau tempoh risiko paling rendah.

"Sebab kita tahu pilihan raya ini melibatkan proses yang ramai orang keluar, kempen dan mengundi," jelasnya.

19,105 kes baharu, 28,250 sembuh - Dr Noor Hisham

SHAH ALAM - Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) merekodkan sejumlah 19,105 kes baharu Covid-19 pada Ahad, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes adalah sebanyak 3,993,124.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, jumlah berkenaan melibatkan 18,713 kes tempatan dan 386 kes import.

"Bagi pecahan daripada jumlah tersebut, sebanyak 8,267 kes atau 43.27 peratus daripada pesakit Covid-19 kategori satu, sementara 10,645 kes atau 55.72 peratus pula pesakit kategori dua."

"Bagi kategori tiga, terdapat 81 kes (0.42 peratus), kategori empat dengan 44 kes (0.23 peratus) dan bagi kategori lima

adalah sebanyak 68 kes (0.36 peratus)," katanya dalam kenyataan pada Isnin.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, berdasarkan jumlah keseluruhan 193 kes bagi pesakit kategori tiga hingga lima, 58 kes dilaporkan tidak divaksinasi atau belum lengkap mendapatkan pelarian berkenaan.

"Sejumlah 78 kes pula sudah menerima dua dos vaksin Covid-19 tetapi tidak menerima dos penggalak. Sebanyak 57 kes sudah menerima dos penggalak."

"Selain itu, 92 kes melibatkan mereka yang berumur 60 tahun



DR NOOR HISHAM

ke atas. Sebanyak 81 kes lagi mempunyai komorbid dan tiada melibatkan kes ibu mengandung."

"Sebanyak 371 kes memerlukan rawatan di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) dengan 158 daripadanya disahkan Covid-19, manakala kes disyaki, kemungkinan dan kes dalam siasatan pula adalah sebanyak 213," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham turut memaklumkan negara merekodkan sebanyak 28,250 kes sembuh, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kepada 3,684,665 kes setakat ini.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

GENOMIC SURVEILLANCE

OMICRON BA.2 TO DOMINATE IN MALAYSIA

It is the most transmissible among all three sublineages, says Health D-G

TEOH PEI YING
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE Omicron sublineage BA.2 is expected to become the dominant Covid-19 variant in Malaysia soon.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said continuous genomic surveillance showed that Omicron had replaced Delta as the dominant variant in the country.

He said the Omicron variant of concern (VOC) had three sublineages, namely BA.1, BA.2 and BA.3. He noted that up to March 20, there were still no reports of the BA.3 sublineage in Malaysia.

The BA.1 sublineage itself had been divided into two, which were known as BA.1 and BA.1.1.

"BA.2 is worrying as it is more transmissible than other Omicron sublineages and the Delta variant," he said yesterday.

Genomic surveillance was being conducted at various public universities, namely the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Molecular Biology Institute (UMBI-UKM); the Integrative Pharmacogenomics Institute at Universiti Teknologi Mara (IPROMISE-UITM); Universiti Malaya's Tropical Infectious Diseases Research and Education Centre (TIDREC-UM); Malaysia Genome & Vaccine Institute (MGVI); the Institute of Health and Community Medicine at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (IHCM-Unimas); Universiti Putra Malaysia Teaching Hospital (HP-UPM); Universiti Sains Malaysia Hospital (HUSM); Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS); Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia in Kuantan; and, the Institute for Medical Research (IMR).

Dr Noor Hisham said infections involving the BA.2 sublineage had been rising now compared with the past two months.

"BA.1.1 had increased from 38.3 per cent in January to 48.7 per cent in February, but dropped to



A laboratory worker preparing samples for Covid-19 testing and genetic surveillance at Hospital USM in Kota Baru. FILE PIC

40 per cent in March (March 1 to March 17).

"BA.2 has increased to 27.1 per cent as of March 17. BA.2 cases were only at 0.9 per cent and 2.7 per cent in January and March, respectively," he said.

Dr Noor Hisham said the same situation had been reported in other countries, including Denmark, India and Nepal, where the BA.2 sublineage had become the dominant Covid-19 variant.

"The Health Ministry believes there is a huge possibility that the BA.2 sublineage will become dominant in Malaysia soon.

"Hence, Malaysians must be vigilant about the spread of BA.2 but, at the same time, we are also concerned about the prolonged Delta variant that has had a severe impact, particularly on unvaccinated or unboosted groups," he said.

Dr Noor Hisham reiterated his call in urging children and senior citizens to get the Covid-19 booster dose as preparations for the transition to the endemic phase would start next month.

"Research has suggested that a booster is recommended as it will increase neutralising antibodies against BA.1 or BA.2.

"Boosters will protect them from getting serious illness, hospitalisation or being admitted to Intensive Care Units," he said.

He added that 65.7 per cent of the adult population had received booster jabs while only 35.3 per cent of children aged 5 to 11 in the country had been vaccinated.

"Parents and family members need to play a vital role and act proactively to convince the vulnerable groups to get vaccinated and get a booster shot, as facts have proven the importance of vaccines and boosters for safety and health," he said.

Meanwhile, Malaysia reported 19,105 new Covid-19 cases on Sunday, the first time since Feb 10 that daily infections had fallen below the 20,000-mark.

Dr Noor Hisham said 98.99 per cent of the new cases were in Categories 1 and 2, while the remaining 1.01 per cent or 193 cases were in Categories 3, 4 and 5.

"Of the 193 Category 3, 4 and 5 cases, 78 have completed two doses of Covid-19 vaccine, 58 cases were unvaccinated or had only received one dose of the vaccine, while 57 had received their booster dose.

"Almost half of the cases involved those aged 60 and above, and 81 cases have comorbidities," he said.

He also noted that the number of Covid-19 daily hospital admissions in the country were on a downward trend, with 1,239 cases admitted on Sunday.

Of the total, 713 patients were Category 1 and 2 cases, while 713 were Category 3, 4 and 5 cases.

The number of Covid-19 daily admissions had gradually decreased since March 15.

On that date, 1,782 Covid-19 patients were admitted, followed by 1,743 admissions on March 16, March 17 (1,669), March 18 (1,665), and March 19 (1,394).

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

GE15

VOTING PROTOCOLS FOR COVID PATIENTS

Health Ministry, EC liaise on enabling Covid-19 patients to exercise their right as voters, says Khairy

TEH ATHIRA YUSOF
AND KALBANA PERIMBANAYAGAM
PUTRAJAYA
news@nst.com.my

THE Health Ministry will discuss voting protocols with the Election Commission (EC) to enable Covid-19 patients to vote in upcoming elections.

Its minister Khairy Jamaluddin said he had instructed his officers to meet with the EC and come up with the safest protocols for Covid-19 patients to exercise their right to vote.

"We have to accept that Covid-19 is here to stay. If we deny them the right to vote, we will be denying them their constitutional rights. So, we need to come up with the safest way for them to vote," he said after launching the Clinical Research Malaysia Phase I Realisation Project report at the ministry's headquarters here yesterday.

Khairy, however, admitted that drafting the protocols would take time.



Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin visiting the conjoined twins who were separated in Tunku Azizah Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, recently. With him is Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah. PIC COURTESY OF HEALTH MINISTRY

"There are suggestions to allow those who are positive with Covid-19 to vote via post, but what happens if they test positive one or two days before polling day?"

"If they are voting physically at the voting centres, who will be monitoring them at which voting channel? Will there be a specific voting channel for Covid-19 patients?"

Khairy said there was no hid-

den agenda to delay the 15th General Election, only the need to prioritise public health.

"I am not saying we want to delay or whatever, but political consideration is also one (of the factors). As an Umno member, I understand the political consideration, but we are also in the government and we have to think of other things."

"The most important thing is not about political wants, but the

public health," he said. At the same time, Khairy said for the general election to be held, it must be at a suitable time.

"The timing or period for the election to be held must be when it is at the lowest risk because we know every election is a process that involves people going out to campaign and vote as well as other activities," he said.

Following that, Khairy also said it was hard to track the constantly

mutating coronavirus, but the ministry was monitoring it closely, including the Omicron BA.2 subvariant.

"We are monitoring the effects of Omicron BA.2, such as the severity of the cases and side effects. So it is too early to summarise the effects of this subvariant in the next three to six months. We need to hold the elections when it is least risky," he said.

'Heed S.O.P. irrespective of virus variant'

KUALA LUMPUR: Irrespective of Covid-19 variants and sublineages that may emerge, people must continue to comply with coronavirus preventive measures to ward off potential infections.

Public health expert and epidemiologist Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar advised the people to remain vigilant as the Omicron BA.2 sublineage was becoming widespread.

"It is natural for viruses to mutate, whereby for Omicron, there are already three sublineages reported in the country, which are BA.1, BA.1.1 and now BA.2."

"BA.2 is said to be higher in transmissibility and it is a distinct subvariant of Omicron. The

Omicron variant will remain dominant globally.

"While the number of BA.2 cases are up, Malaysia must continue its surveillance and monitoring of the development of other new sublineages, including BA.3."

"There should be assessment of clinical significance, severity and matching with epidemiology data," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah yesterday revealed that the Health Ministry was keeping a close watch on the BA.2 sublineage as cases were spiking sharply.

Cases involving BA.2 had risen from 0.9 per cent to 2.7 per cent in

January and February this year to 27.1 per cent between March 1 and 17.

Dr Noor Hisham expressed concern over the BA.2 sublineage as it might have higher transmissibility compared with other Omicron sublineages, as well as the Delta variant.

He added that up to Sunday, there were no reports on the existence of the BA.3 sublineage in the country.

Dr Zainal Ariffin said all indicators for the transition to endemic phase were at a satisfactory level.

This was despite the nation's daily cases fluctuating between 20,000 and 30,000 of late, he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Associate Professor Dr Malina Osman said it was too early to say if BA.2 would cause more severe illness compared with the previous Omicron sublineages.



A woman using the MySejahtera app before entering a building in Kuala Lumpur. The Health Ministry is keeping a close watch on the Omicron BA.2 sublineage as cases are spiking sharply. FILE PIC

ron sublineages.

"Based on available data, I think we will have to wait for its real impact. The situation may be different from one region to another."

"At the moment, I think the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) is doing its best to provide the data. Currently, I feel that Omicron is the more dominant variant than Delta."

"The country should be cautious and we should be protecting ourselves from any potential infection," she said.

On Feb 24, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the IMR was studying the BA.2 virus to determine its transmissibility and severity as reports had indicated that it could be more serious than the original Omicron BA.1 sublineage.



Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NATION

Covid-19 patients should be able to vote

Khairy: New protocol needed to protect their right



Health topic:

Khairy delivering his address during the launch of the Clinical Research Malaysia annual report in Putrajaya. — Bernama

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
mazwin@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: Not wanting to deny voters of their right, health authorities and the Election Commission will look at the safest protocol to allow those who are Covid-19 positive to still cast their ballots, says Khairy Jamaluddin.

The Health Minister said having this protocol in place was crucial as the coronavirus was here to stay and voters should not be denied their constitutional right because of an illness.

"So, we are exploring the safest way for infected individuals to vote," he said after launching the Clinical Research Malaysia annual report yesterday.

Khairy said the case of an infected voter not being allowed to cast her ballot during the Johor polls was because this protocol was not in place then.

On March 12, a woman was given a RM1,000 compound for turning up at a polling centre in Larkin despite not having completed her quarantine after testing positive for Covid-19.

Khairy pointed out that there had been proposals that Covid-19 patients be considered for postal voting, but this would still be a problem if the person was to be found infected shortly before polling.

"We are also looking at how these voters could get to polling centres and if there should be dedicated polling streams for those who are positive.

"We need some time to get the protocol ready. We are not one to delay (the polls) but while political consideration is one factor, public health must be one of the top priorities when the general election is discussed," he said.

Khairy said the most suitable

time should be sought to hold the national polls.

"It should be held during a period where Covid-19 risks are at its lowest," he said.

He said experts were of the view that the earliest time to call for a general election would be three months after Malaysia had transitioned to the endemic phase on April 1 and the most ideal would be six months to allow for time to determine the virus' "way forward".

"We do not know how things will be in three or six months' time. The more the virus circulates and infects, the higher the chances of mutation; new variants may emerge," said Khairy.

The just concluded Umno general assembly saw delegates calling for the 15th General Election to be held soon.

The current term of the government ends in June 2023.

AKHBAR : THE SUN

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

Cases drop to below 20,000

KUALA LUMPUR: Covid-19 daily positive cases have seen a downward trend of below 20,000 for four consecutive days, with 19,105 cases recorded on Sunday, compared with 22,341 on Saturday.

Based on data on the CovidNOW website, the last time the country recorded positive cases of below 20,000 was on Feb 10, with 19,090.

The number subsequently increased to 20,939 on Feb 11 and continued on an upward trend, recording 32,800 cases on March 11 before dropping to 26,250 on March 12.

Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said 28,250 recovery cases were recorded on Sunday, which was higher than the number of positive cases detected

that day.

"Of the 19,105 positive cases recorded (on Sunday), 18,912 or 98.99% were in categories One and Two. A total of 8,267 were in Category One, while 10,645 were in Category Two," he said in a statement yesterday, adding that the remaining 193 cases (1.01%) were in categories Three, Four and Five.

Of the 193 cases, he said 81 (0.42%) were in Category Three, 44 (0.23%) in Category Four and 68 (0.36%) in Category Five.

On the infectivity rate (Rt), he said Sarawak recorded the highest of 1.03 on Sunday while Sabah had the lowest, at 0.64.

He added that five states recorded more than 50% bed usage at intensive care units (ICU), namely Kuala Lumpur (67%), Johor

(66%), Perlis (64%), Kelantan (58%) and Selangor (56%).

Noor Hisham said continuous genomic research and surveillance conducted by seven universities and the Medical Research Institute showed that the Omicron variant has begun to replace the Delta variant as the main strain spreading among the population.

He also said the three Omicron variant sub-lineages in the country were the BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2.

"For the period between March 1 and 17, it was found that the Omicron sub-lineage BA.2 variant increased to 27.1% compared with January and February, with reporting for the Omicron sub-lineage BA.2 variant at only 0.9% and 2.7% respectively. - Bernama

SOP for Covid positive GE15 voters

PUTRAJAYA: The Health Ministry is in discussions with the Election Commission (EC) to draw up safe protocols for Covid 19 positive voters to cast their ballots in the 15th general election (GE15), said Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

"Covid-19 will stay with us. If we deny them their right to vote, we are denying a constitutional right," he told a media conference after launching the Clinical Research Malaysia 2021 annual report and the Phase 1 Realisation Project report yesterday.

During the Johor state election on March 12, a voter was fined RM1,000 for showing up to vote despite being under quarantine.

Khairy said the ministry and EC were devising the best measures for Covid-positive individuals to vote.

"Some (have suggested allowing) those infected to use postal voting, but how would it be for those who were infected one or two days before polling day?"

"If they wish to vote, who is going to take them and which channel should they use? Should we have a special channel for Covid-19 patients? So, this matter needs more time."

Khairy said public health should be the priority when discussing GE15.

"We need to find the most suitable timing and period of lowest risk to hold GE15 as it involves the people going out to campaign and vote."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob was earlier reported as saying the issue of dissolution of Parliament to make way for GE15 would be discussed among the top five Umno leaders and if the party was confident of winning, it would not be delayed. - Bernama

Kedah, Perak record highest deaths

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 1,263,287 children aged five to 11 have received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children as of Sunday.

The CovidNOW website showed 2,942,399 adolescents aged 12 to 17 have received at least one dose, including 2,843,805 who have been fully vaccinated. A total of 15,483,571 individuals have received their boosters and 22,943,182 have been fully vaccinated while 23,219,105 received at least one dose.

On Sunday, 27,330 doses were administered, with 9,849 as first doses, 1,116 as second shots and 16,365 boosters, bringing the cumulative total vaccine doses given to 68,484,635.

The Health Ministry GitHub portal showed that 71 deaths due to Covid-19 were recorded on Sunday, with Kedah and Perak reporting the highest number at 14 cases each, followed by Johor with 11, Selangor with seven, while Kelantan, Penang and Sarawak had five cases each.

Negri Sembilan reported four cases, Terengganu and Kuala Lumpur registered two cases each while Pahang and Malacca each recorded one death. - Bernama



BACK TO NORMAL ... Chairman of the Kapitan Keling Mosque in Penang, Datuk Faruk Raja Mohamed, holding a poster to announce that prayers at the premises will be conducted without the need for social distancing beginning April 1. - MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN