

National

Malaysia to leverage genomics for more resilient healthcare system

SHAH ALAM: Malaysia aims to leverage genomics to build a more proactive, inclusive and resilient healthcare system.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Hanifah Hajar Taib said genomics has moved beyond the laboratory and is now shaping modern medicine, including infectious disease detection, precision cancer treatment and the diagnosis of rare diseases.

"As tools such as Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) continue to advance, our goal is to ensure these innovations remain equitable, affordable and accessible to all Malaysians," she said in her keynote address at the Next Generation Genomics

Congress: Asia 2026, held at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) here yesterday.

She said the success of medical innovation must be supported by a strong healthcare ecosystem, including proper nutrition, regular physical activity, effective stress management and the sustainable use of natural resources.

In this regard, genomics complements these fundamental factors in delivering more holistic and effective health outcomes.

Hanifah added that Malaysia is strengthening its efforts through the MyGENOM initiative, a national population genomics project that underpins precision medicine. — Bernama

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S'wak records 30 pct of colorectal cancer cases among under-40s

MIRI: Data from Sarawak shows that 30 per cent of colorectal cancer cases occur among individuals below the age of 40, highlighting a worrying trend of early-onset cases in the state.

Miri Hospital colorectal surgeon Dr Kenneth Voon said although the Ministry of Health has stated that the majority of male and female colorectal cancer patients are diagnosed at the age of 50 and above, Sarawak's data presents a different picture.

"Screening is generally recommended for those aged between 50 and 75. However, we must bear in mind that Sarawak data shows that 30 per cent of colorectal cancer cases occur in those under 40," he said.

He was speaking at the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Campaign 2026 and Colorectal Cancer Medication Services programme at Miri Hospital yesterday.

Also present was Miri Hospital director Dr Jack Wong.

Dr Voon also revealed that his youngest patient is a girl aged 16, and that he was scheduled to operate on her soon.

"So, do not think that age is a form of protection," he stressed.

He added that 70 per cent of colorectal cancer cases are detected at a late stage, namely stages three and four, and emphasised the importance of early detection, noting that



Dr Voon delivers his speech.

treatment can begin immediately if cancer is identified early.

"If it is detected very early, we can remove it straight away during a colonoscopy, and the patient is treated. But if it is advanced, surgery is required, and patients may need to undergo chemotherapy or radiotherapy," he said.

According to him, treatment and recovery become far more complicated when cancer is detected at an advanced stage.

Dr Voon also shared that many patients take time to fully come to terms with their diagnosis.

"It causes a lot of stress, affecting work and family life. I always tell my patients that the cancer treatment process is like going into a battle or a war.

"We are fighting against millions and millions of cancer cells," he said.

Meanwhile, Miri mayor Adam Yii said that early detection saves

lives.

As highlighted by Dr Voon, Yii noted that hospitals continue to record a significant number of new colorectal cancer cases each year.

"This reminds us that awareness and screening must be continuous efforts—not just for today, but throughout the years," he said in a speech read by Councillor Huang Hong Siong.

Yii also commended the doctors and specialists at Miri Hospital for their commitment to strengthening healthcare services, including the expansion of endoscopy units and the introduction of colorectal cancer medication services.

"This initiative will greatly support patients in their journey, because truly, no one fights cancer alone. Let us all take responsibility to be aware, to encourage screening, and to support one another," he added.

CIMB says Duopharma navigating geopolitical risks, keeps 'Buy' call

KUALA LUMPUR: Duopharma Biotech Bhd (DBB) is navigating geopolitical risks as the intensifying US-Iran conflict poses two primary risks to the group: a direct impact on export sales and spikes in raw material prices.

CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd noted that the impact on sales is expected to be minimal, as only 0.4% of DBB's total sales are derived from exports to Middle Eastern countries.

Regarding the spike in raw material prices, particularly active pharmaceutical ingredients, DBB indicated that it currently holds sufficient inventory to last at least six months.

CIMB Securities said this is broadly in line with the Health Ministry's previous guidance of maintaining stock buffers of up to five months, thereby mitigating the risk of raw material shortages.

"The company continues to closely monitor developments related to the Middle Eastern conflict and will implement price adjustments in the private sector, where feasible, to cushion any cost impact," the research firm said.

CIMB Securities said DBB expects the award of a new three-year contract to supply human insulin by the third quarter of 2026. The previous contract expired in October 2025.

The research firm also noted that in February 2026, the Health Ministry (MOH) awarded DBB a short-term contract worth RM65.1 million to supply recombinant human insulin (RHI) until May 2026.

"As MOH insulin supply contracts typically run for three years, the current arrangement is seen as an interim extension pending the finalisation of the longer-term tender," CIMB Securities said.

CIMB Securities maintained a "Buy" call on DBB, but lowered its target price to RM1.93.

The research house reduced DBB's core net profit forecasts for FY26-28 by 8%, 7% and 7% respectively - to reflect higher input and logistics costs.

The firm said the revised target price represents a 7% cut and is based on an unchanged FY27 price-to-earnings multiple of 16 times, in line with its three-year historical average.

Schools' heatwave plan in the works

KAJANG: The Education Ministry will develop a comprehensive long-term plan to face heatwaves to minimise disruptions to the academic calendar and protect students' health.

Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek said while short-term measures like home-based teaching and learning was an option, a more sustainable strategy was needed to deal with hot weather.

"We get guidance and advice from the Health Ministry and Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia).

"We will work closely with them to ensure our plans are organised and effective, without interfering with the children's learning process."

Fadhlina said the ministry's top priority was the safety and well-being of the school community.

"Our priority is the children's education and also the health of our school citizens. Therefore, all decisions must be made based on guidance from experts at the Health Ministry and MetMalaysia."

She was asked to comment on suggestions from experts about improving school infrastructure, including constructing covered areas for co-curricular activities and installing air-conditioning units.

Fadhlina acknowledged that air-conditioning was increasingly being seen as a necessity rather than a luxury.

"Those are all good suggestions. If the guidelines for covered areas in schools can be improved, we will do our best to do so."

She said the ministry was open to expert recommendations to improve the school environment.