

Family with eight kids monitored for TB

By SHARON LING
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KUCHING: A family with eight children is being monitored for suspected tuberculosis at the Sarawak General Hospital here following intervention by the state Welfare Department, says Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri.

The Women, Family and Community Development Minister said the family members who were living in dilapidated conditions at 13th Mile here, will receive welfare assistance once they are discharged.

"We found out about the family's plight when it went viral on social media.

"Our immediate step was to send them to hospital to be checked whether they have tuberculosis," she told reporters after launching the Sinergi Kasih Wanita programme here yesterday.

Nancy said the family was expected to be discharged by the end of this month, after which temporary custody orders will be obtained for the children.

"There may be suitable people



Women working together: Nancy (centre) greeting participants at the Sinergi Kasih Wanita programme in Kuching. The event gathered 300 participants from NGOs across Sarawak. — ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star

who can care for them. If not, we will have to undertake that responsibility," she said.

She said two boys, aged 11 and 15, would be placed at Rumah Kanak-Kanak Datuk Ajibah Abol in Sri Aman, while five girls under 10 years and a three-month-old

baby will be placed at Rumah Kanak-Kanak Toh Puan Hajah Norkiah here.

She said the parents and four other adult family members will be placed temporarily at Anjung Singgah Kuching after they are discharged from hospital.

"We will help them move to affordable rented premises. We will also consider further financial assistance for them," Nancy said.

She added that welfare officers were also assisting the parents to apply for birth certificates for two of the children.

Ministry boosting buffer stock of meds, medical devices

PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry is strengthening its buffer stocks for critical medicines and medical devices.

This is part of its efforts to ensure the security of the supplies following the global energy crisis, it said yesterday.

"The ministry is also diversifying supply sources and continuously monitoring raw materials and the supply chain with the industry to enable the risk of disruption to be identified earlier

and addressed in a targeted manner," it said in a statement.

Among the measures implemented are the Special Access Pathway, emergency response plans, the fixing of controlled items, as well as the expanded use of e-labelling for medical devices.

The Special Access Pathway is an initiative to ensure continued access to critical and life-saving medicines.

"The current global energy crisis has affected the global supply

chain, including medicines and medical devices.

"This has impacted the delivery and unstable access to several critical medical devices, especially imported products for high-risk categories," the statement said.

According to the ministry, this situation has also, among other things, affected the ability of suppliers to meet contractual obligations, in addition to potentially affecting the continuity of health service delivery if not

addressed immediately.

The ministry elaborated that supply management is carried out prudently through distribution based on clinical needs and rational use.

This is in addition to the preparation of alternative clinical treatment plans and facilitating regulatory processes to ensure continued access to medicines.

In the medium and long term, the ministry said it would strengthen supply resilience

through the transition from resin to polymer materials, the implementation of Unique Device Identification (UDI) and the development of a local industry for medical devices.

For medicines, the ministry said the drug supply security policy is being developed through the MyMedSecure initiative, strengthening local production, digitalisation of the supply chain and the establishment of a national strategic buffer stock.

Protecting patents to ensure supplies

Guidelines aim to ensure drug access for patients

By RAGANANTHINI VETHASALAM
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PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry is drafting guidelines to ensure hospitals will have continued access to generic medicines even during legal disputes from the original brand names over patent issues.

Known as the patent linkage guideline, it is also to ensure generic drugs do not infringe on innovator drug patents.

It will allow access to generic drugs but at the same time ensure that the patent of innovator drugs is not infringed.

This guideline is meant to prevent any problem should there be a court case between the patent holder and the generic drug manufacturer.

The guidelines are necessary as Malaysia had ratified the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in September 2022.

Article 18.53 of the agreement requires members to establish a notification mechanism to patent holders, provide adequate opportunity to seek legal remedies and establish procedures to resolve patent disputes before marketing.

According to the ministry in a public consultation document released recently, the guidelines would fulfil Malaysia's CPTPP commitments, besides safeguarding access to medicines.

It also helps in preserving judicial determination of patent disputes and ensuring regulatory neutrality, it said.

Malaysia has four-and-a-half

years from the date of the agreement coming into force to implement the patent linkage measures.

"This provision emphasises the importance of protecting intellectual property in the pharmaceutical industry while ensuring timely access to affordable medicines," said the ministry's document.

Patent linkage refers to a regulatory mechanism that links the approval of a generic pharmaceutical product to the patent status of the corresponding New Drug Product (NDP).

"It does not prevent generic entry. It introduces a transparent notification mechanism allowing patent disputes to be resolved through the courts," the ministry said.

Patent linkage will apply to all pharmaceutical product registra-



Balancing act: The Health Ministry says the patent linkage guideline emphasises the importance of protecting intellectual property while ensuring timely access to affordable medicines. —AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

tion applications intended for human use, except for biologics.

This includes pharmaceutical products originating from all countries and not limited to countries that are parties to the CPTPP.

Patent linkage will only apply to product patents claiming the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API), formulation, polymorphs, salts, esters, dosage form, dosing regimen; as well as patents claiming approved medical use under the NDP.

It will not apply to patents for manufacturing and packaging.

Patent linkage will not apply during public health emergency; products which requires a compulsory licence under the Patents Act, and those where the rights of the government is authorised

under the Patents Act and other urgent national measures.

Those applying for patent linkage due to their patent status or with the intention of marketing their products must indicate whether the product is protected by a granted patent in Malaysia (MyIPO).

The National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NRPRA) will verify procedural compliance, manage notification and suspension periods, and notify the generic product registration holder (PRH) when legal proceedings are initiated by PRH NDP patent owner and patent licensee.

However, the NRPRA will not determine patent validity, interpret patent scope and decide on patent infringement.

Patent linkage needs careful balance, say experts

By BENJAMIN LEE
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PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry must strike a balance between incentivising innovation and ensuring accessibility of key generic drugs in implementing patent linkage for pharmaceutical products, say health professionals.

This comes after the ministry revealed that it is drafting guidelines to ensure hospitals have constant access to generic medicines even during legal challenges from innovator drug producers over patent issues.

"The guidelines would help to strengthen the regulatory ecosystem and align with international commitments," said Pharmaniaga Berhad managing director Datuk Zulkiffi Jafar said.

"Through enhancing transparency and providing greater clari-

ty in the medicine approval process, it will also support greater confidence among industry stakeholders."

However, Zulkiffi said the framework must be well-balanced to support innovation while also ensuring continued widespread access to affordable generic medication.

"It is crucial that such a framework does not inadvertently delay the availability of essential and affordable generic medicines, particularly for the public healthcare system where generics play a vital role in cost management and broadening patient access.

"We will continue to engage with the ministry and other stakeholders as the framework is refined to ensure it supports both industry growth and patient access," he added.

Malaysian Organisation of Pharmaceutical Industries presi-

dent Ch'ng Kien Peng said the guidelines are unlikely to significantly affect the government's "Generic First" policy.

"There will be minimal impact as the guidelines mostly just introduce a formal notification mechanism and defined timelines for resolving patent-related matters without affecting patent rights.

"For patent holders, the proposal would offer greater clarity and an opportunity to seek legal recourse when a generic company intends to market a product while a patent remains in force.

"Generic manufacturers may, in certain cases, only face a temporary delay due to the procedural steps such as notification, but can still be resolved by early filing and regulatory evaluation," he said.

Public health medicine specialist Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar, however, cautioned that the patent linkage guidelines could cause

the generic drug approval process to be delayed.

"Generic drug companies would have to declare that their products do not infringe on existing patents and patent owners will likely be given a formal window of maybe 30 days to sue for infringement.

"This would automatically stall the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency's approval process until the court case is resolved, thus creating a significant new barrier to entry and will likely increase costs for generic drugmakers," he said.

He also said the proposal could strengthen and extend the legal monopoly of brand-name drugs by preventing non-brand name drugs from reaching markets.

"The proposal would move the battleground from the usual courts, after a product is launched to the market, to the regulatory

approval stage itself, before the product is even launched.

"This provides a powerful, early mechanism for patent holders to block generic competitors entirely before they enter the market," he said.

Zainal said the proposed guidelines would also significantly strengthen patent protection by preventing the approval of potentially infringing generics.

He said this would reduce costly post-market litigation and secure longer market exclusivity of patented drugs.

"Generic drug manufacturers can also benefit as it will provide them a formal linkage system with a patent registry that provides legal clarity and predictability on patented drugs.

"This allows them to 'design around' valid patents properly and better challenge weak patents earlier," he added.

THE Malaysian workplace operates at a high speed that forces employees to stay at work for extended periods, while also keeping their devices connected when not in the office.

The emphasis on productivity has led to more people developing chronic stress and burnout, while their chances of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, heart disease and hypertension (high blood pressure) grow higher.

According to the 2023 National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS), over half a million Malaysians live with four NCDs, with diabetes alone affecting 15.6% of the population and rising cases seen among those aged 18 to 29.

Medical check-ups often fail to detect many of the health issues caused by stress.

Medical officer Dr Wee Hui Yin observes that patients rarely mention "burnout", but they frequently show signs of stress during their medical consultations and history evaluation sessions. "Many don't call it burnout, but it appears as fatigue, irritability, sleep issues, and lower tolerance at work and home," she notes.

"Malaysia's burnout rate is alarmingly high, with 67% of workers reporting burnout in 2024, a significant jump from 58% in 2022," she shares, quoting results from The 2024 Wellness At Work Report by human resources solutions platform Employment Hero.

While noting that millennials and Gen Z are the most vocal about it, mid-life adults may be especially vulnerable to burnout, she says.

As the "sandwich generation", they balance careers with caring for both children and ageing parents, often internalising stress instead of addressing it, which raises their long-term health risks.

From stress to disease

The human body develops two different health problems when stress continues to exist.

First are physiological problems, where prolonged exposure

From burnout to balance

Many people don't view burnout as a medical problem, but it can lead to actual disease in the long run if not managed.

to stress hormones such as cortisol can lead to increased blood sugar levels, higher bad cholesterol, greater visceral fat accumulation and elevated blood pressure.

The person can also experience psychological distress where they develop depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and dangerous drinking habits, which can ultimately create additional health threats for them.

"These changes significantly increase the risk of diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

"Stress also causes inflammation and stiffening of the arteries, which helps explain why some people develop heart problems even without obvious risk factors," says Dr Wee.

She explains that health screening programmes will not achieve meaningful results if they focus only on annual tests, without appropriate post-screening medical follow-up and lifestyle intervention.

"Some patients come every year, but their results remain the same," she says.

"Often, it is not lack of awareness, but a lack of time, guidance and support, accompanied by long working hours, poor routines and the feeling of not knowing where to start.

"That means no real changes are made."

A preventive health routine requires regular monitoring of

blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels, BMI (body mass index), waist circumference, kidney function, stress levels and sleep quality.

These results should guide lifestyle adjustments and follow-up care, rather than exist as stand-alone diagnostic checks.

A holistic approach

Health is more than avoiding sickness; it means living well.

Dr Wee, who is certified in lifestyle medicine, advocates a holistic approach that combines medical care with lifestyle, diet and mental health.

"Using lifestyle medicine, we always encourage healthy eating, stress management and better sleep as chronic diseases continue to increase in Malaysia."

She points to the world's Blue Zones, i.e. places like Okinawa in Japan, Loma Linda in California, United States, and Sardinia in Italy, where people consistently live longer, healthier lives with fewer chronic diseases.

"These communities share a simple formula called the 'Power of 9'.

"They move naturally every day, eat mostly plant-based meals, manage stress well and maintain strong social bonds.

"It is not about rigid routines or unrealistic health goals.

"It is about helping people make small, practical changes they can

actually stick to," she explains.

"People can achieve this by walking more at work, preparing nutritious home meals and dedicating more time to their family relationships."

Taking the first step

For individuals who feel "too busy" to prioritise their health, Dr Wee's advice is simple: start small and start now.

Regaining balance does not require a complete lifestyle overhaul. She recommends:

- > Taking short breaks every few hours to walk or stretch, which can boost focus and relieve stress.
- > Not viewing physical activity strictly as formal exercise, it can also be accomplished by standing up often, using the stairs, parking farther away or taking brief walks.
- > Trying square breathing for acute stress: inhale, hold, exhale and pause for four seconds each, for one to two minutes.
- > Aiming for seven to nine hours of sleep nightly, while avoiding late-night screen time, as quality sleep is essential.

Dr Wee also notes that workplace culture plays a key role in individual well-being.

Expectations of long hours and constant connectivity can negatively affect employees' physical and mental health, leading to reduced work quality.

"Being at work longer doesn't mean being more effective," she notes.

Employers that offer practical support like childcare, clear work boundaries, self-care and healthy leadership can help reduce employee stress and burnout, especially for mid-career caregivers.

Healthy employees are more productive, so seeking healthcare help promptly is important.

"Stress and burnout are not personal failures.

"When you take care of yourself, you are not being selfish, you are making it possible to care for others and sustain your life and career in the long run," says Dr Wee.



OBESITY is a complex, chronic disease shaped by biological, environmental and societal factors.

While physical activity is a key component of both prevention and treatment, the authors of a new statement from the World Obesity Federation

emphasise that individual behaviour change alone is not enough. The federation's chief executive officer Johanna Ralston said: "Physical activity is fundamental to both preventing and managing obesity, but it does not exist in a vacuum."

"People's ability to be active is shaped by the environments they live in, the systems that support them and the opportunities available to them.

"We must move beyond outdated narratives of individual responsibility, and instead, invest in policies and systems that make physical activity accessible, inclusive and achievable for all."

Globally, levels of physical inactivity are rising, with more

Removing barriers to physical activity

than 30% of adults not meeting recommended activity levels.

Without stronger, coordinated action, the world is unlikely to meet global targets to reduce inactivity by 2030.

The statement, published in conjunction with World Physical Activity Day on Monday in the journal *Obesity Reviews*, highlights that physical activity supports a wide range of health outcomes, including improved cardiovascular and metabolic health, better mental well-being and reduced risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

For people living with obesity, it also plays an important role in improving physical function, quality of life and long-term health outcomes.

However, the paper also makes clear that physical activity should not be viewed through a narrow lens of weight alone.

World Obesity Federation Programme Development and Strategy director and statement co-author Dr Angie Jackson-Morris said: "Improving health outcomes for people living with obesity requires more than a focus on weight alone.

"Movement plays a critical role in promoting cardiovascular, metabolic, musculoskeletal and mental health, and should be embedded in prevention strategies and clinical care.

"To make this a reality, we need coordinated action to remove barriers and ensure opportunities to be active are



Enabling higher levels of physical activity requires urban planning that encourages convenient public transportation methods that include walking, among others. — Filepic

accessible and inclusive for all." The publication comes at a time of growing global attention on new obesity treatments, including GLP-1 (glucagon-like

peptide-1) receptor agonist medications. While these therapies represent an important advance, the authors stress that they must be

delivered as part of comprehensive, person-centred care.

Approaches that combine medical treatment with physical activity and nutrition support are essential to support long-term health and well-being.

The World Obesity Federation is calling on governments and policymakers to take a whole-of-society approach to increasing physical activity.

This will require deliberate policy choices to move beyond car-dependent, inequitable systems and make movement part of everyday life by:

- > Rebalancing transport investment towards walking, cycling, recreation and active travel infrastructure, rather than continued reliance on car-centric planning.
- > Embedding physical activity within health systems, including routine support in primary and community care, rather than treating it as an optional add-on.

> Aligning urban planning, transport and education policies to make physical activity an integrated part of daily life across the life course.

> Targeting inequalities by prioritising safe, accessible opportunities for physical activity in underserved and marginalised communities.

World Obesity Federation Policy and Prevention Committee chair and Monash University Malaysia professor of Health Policy Dr Kent Buse said: "Let's be honest: people are not failing to be active; rather, systems are failing them.

"Inactivity has been deliberately engineered into our cities, our economies and our daily lives, while responsibility is shifted onto individuals.

"Until governments confront the commercial, political and urban systems that constrain movement, progress on obesity will remain performative rather than real."

SARAWAK

By ANDY CHUA
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THE government aims to recruit 15,000 nurses for public hospitals nationwide this year to strengthen the country's healthcare workforce.

The plan was a proactive response to increasing staffing shortages in the healthcare industry, says Deputy Health Minister Datuk Hanifah Hajar Taib.

She said the role of nurses today extended beyond clinical capabilities to include providing emotional support to patients.

"Nurses not only ensure the smooth delivery of treatment, but also serve as a source of emotional strength for patients.

"This is especially so when they (patients) are going through difficult times without the presence of family members," she said when launching the Nursing Diploma and Simulation Laboratory Programme at Methodist Pilley Institute (MPI) in Sibul, Sarawak.

According to Hanifah, the rising demand for nurses was driven by demographic changes in the country, including an ageing population and the

15,000 nurses for public hospitals nationwide

Plan addresses shortage, strengthens healthcare workforce



Hanifah (right) inspecting equipment at the MPI simulation laboratory during the launch of the nursing programme in Sibul.

increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

"This situation requires continuous monitoring and more intensive long-term care, thereby

increasing demand for sufficient nursing personnel."

Hanifah, who is Mukah MP, also commended MPI for introducing the nursing diploma programme, saying it aligned with the national need for skilled healthcare workers.

"This programme not only creates greater educational opportunities, but also provides a clear career pathway for students in the field of nursing."

She also emphasised the importance of strategic collaboration between education institutions and the private healthcare sector.

Hanifah said the partnership between MPI and Rejang Medical Centre, as well as Borneo Medical Centre through the signing of a memorandum of

understanding, served as a model to be emulated.

"This initiative offers full sponsorships and allowances to students, thereby ensuring employment opportunities upon graduation," she said.

She added that such collaborations could have a significant impact not only on the development of the healthcare workforce, but also on strengthening the country's overall public health system.

Also present at the event were Senator Robert Lau Hui Yew, MPI board of directors chairman Paul Wong Hee Kwong, his deputy Dr Peter Tang, Rejang Medical Centre representative Dr Lau Ngiik Chuong and Borneo Medical Centre representative Dr John Chew.

Support for initiatives to safeguard medicine supply chain

■ THE SUN TEAM

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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has thrown its support behind the government's initiatives to safeguard the nation's medicine and medical device supply chain amid the ongoing global energy crisis triggered by the West Asia conflict.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the MMA said measures announced by the Economy minister, through the National Economic Action Council, were both important and timely, reflecting an appropriate response to the mounting uncertainties rippling through global supply chains.

Among the initiatives MMA endorsed were the introduction of a special access pathway to maintain availability of critical medicines and medical devices, centralised stock monitoring and diversification of import sources, the activation of emergency response plans, moves to establish a national strategic buffer stock and the development of a dedicated medicine security policy under the MyMedSecure framework alongside efforts to grow the domestic pharmaceutical industry.

The Health Ministry has advised that Malaysia's medicine supply remains stable, with no significant disruptions recorded to date.

Local manufacturers are also reported to hold sufficient stocks of both raw materials and finished products to sustain operations for several months.

MMA president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo cautioned against complacency given the fluid



The Health Ministry said Malaysia's medicine supply remains stable, with no significant disruptions recorded to date. – BERNAMAPIC

nature of the global situation.

He outlined three additional measures MMA is calling on the government to pursue.

Its first recommendation is that strategic buffer stocks be built around medicines listed in the National Essential Medicines List, with particular emphasis on treatments for chronic conditions, including diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases – illnesses that affect a large and growing segment of Malaysians

Secondly, it called for greater transparency in the sharing of supply status information with the private healthcare sector.

It said clinics and private hospitals must be kept informed on a proactive basis to ensure continuity of patient care across all healthcare settings, not just public facilities.

Thirdly, and most expansively, the MMA urged Malaysia to treat the current crisis as a catalyst for accelerating domestic

pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity in a structured and sustained manner.

It said building local production capability is a long-term imperative for achieving genuine national health sovereignty.

The MMA said it would continue engaging with the Health Ministry, the National Economic Action Council and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that Malaysians have uninterrupted access to essential medicines and treatment.

'Greater health autonomy the answer'

Dr Sim: More control over planning will allow Sarawak to better address infrastructure, staffing challenges



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KUCHING: Sarawak's push for greater healthcare autonomy is crucial to tackling mounting pressure on its healthcare system caused by manpower shortages and rising demand for services, said Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian.

The Minister of Public Health, Housing and Local Government said greater control over healthcare planning would enable Sarawak to better address staffing and infrastructure challenges.

He said the state is already preparing its Public Health Master Plan 2050, which will take into account disease burden, equipment needs, costs

and manpower requirements.

"Health autonomy is a political decision—whether the federal government wants to give it or not.

"Once we have autonomy, we can plan ahead. We will know how much funding is needed, what must be done, and the resources required, especially human resources," he said at the launch of the 2026 Colorectal Cancer Awareness Campaign at Sarawak General Hospital (SGH) here yesterday.

Dr Sim, who represented Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg at the event, said Sarawak's healthcare system is under significant strain due to staff shortages and increasing patient demand.

He noted that only 528 out of 5,000 medical officer positions nationwide have been filled, leaving more than 4,000 vacancies.

He added that the situation is further compounded

Health autonomy is a political decision—whether the federal government wants to give it or not.

Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian

by competition from the rapidly expanding private healthcare sector, particularly in Kuching.

"In Kuching alone, more than 1,000 new private hospital beds will soon be available, almost matching the capacity of government hospitals, yet we are still facing a shortage of staff," he said.

Citing SGH as an example, he said the 1,000-bed hospital currently has about 4,500 staff, well below the recommended 5,500 for a facility of its size.

"SGH is under-resourced. Every day, people message me asking for help to get a bed from the emergency department."

On colorectal cancer, Dr Sim shared that the disease is a deeply personal issue, having lost his mother to it last year.

"Despite undergoing colonoscopies every three years, she was diagnosed with Stage 2B colorectal cancer after prolonged bleeding. She underwent surgery, chemotherapy, oral treatment and radiotherapy, but relapsed eight months later.

"So sometimes, even when we are vigilant, it can still be tough," he said.

He said his family's experience underscores the importance of continuous public awareness, early screening and timely treatment.

He urged Sarawakians not to treat colorectal cancer awareness as a once-a-year campaign, but as an ongoing public health priority.

Premier: Early screening key as colorectal cancer cases remain high

KUCHING: Sarawakians, particularly those aged 50 and above or with a family history of colorectal cancer, are urged not to delay screening, as early detection can save lives.

Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg said colorectal cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths in Malaysia but is largely preventable and treatable if detected early.

"In Malaysia, colorectal cancer is among the three most common cancers. It is the most common among men and the second most common among women.

"More concerning is that over 60 per cent of patients are diagnosed at Stage III and Stage IV, when treatment becomes more challenging," he said in a speech for the launch of the 2026 Colorectal Cancer Awareness Campaign at the Sarawak General Hospital (SGH) Daycare Centre foyer here yesterday.

The text of his speech was read by Deputy Premier and Minister of Public Health, Housing and Local Government Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian.

Abang Johari noted that while

the risk increases after age 45, recent trends show a growing number of cases among younger individuals.

"This makes awareness and early screening more important than ever," he added.

He said screening methods such as the fecal immunochemical test and colonoscopy enable healthcare providers to detect precancerous polyps before they develop into cancer.

"Strengthening screening programmes, especially at the primary healthcare level, is essential for early prevention," he said.

He also urged the public not to ignore warning signs, including persistent changes in bowel habits, blood in the stool, and prolonged abdominal discomfort, stressing the early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes and survival rates.

On prevention, he highlighted the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, reduced intake of fatty foods, regular physical activity and avoiding smoking.

The campaign features

health education and screening booths involving SGH's colorectal surgery and stoma team, the oncology unit, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Kuching Division Health Office, as well as private hospitals including Normah Medical Specialist Centre, KPJ Kuching Specialist Hospital, and Borneo Medical Centre.

Non-governmental organisations such as the Society for Cancer Advocacy and Awareness Kuching and the National Cancer Society of Malaysia Sarawak Branch are also participating.

Other activities include charity sales, games, lucky draw sessions, as well as handicraft and food stalls.

Abang Johari said tackling colorectal cancer requires a collective effort from healthcare professionals, communities and organisations.

"Together, we can raise awareness, encourage regular screening and support those affected, ensuring more lives are saved through early detection and timely treatment," he said.

Hanifah: Medical assistants key to driving service modernisation

BINTULU: Medical assistants are a vital pillar of Malaysia's healthcare system and play a significant role in driving service modernisation, said Deputy Health Minister Datuk Hanifah Hajar Taib.

Speaking at the state-level Medical Assistants Day 2026 celebration here yesterday, she expressed appreciation for the dedication and sacrifices of medical assistants in ensuring efficient, effective and quality healthcare delivery, particularly in Sarawak.

She said this year's theme, 'Driving Service Modernisation, Enhancing Healthcare Quality', reflects the urgent need for the healthcare system to evolve in line with rapid technological advancements and global health changes.

"In an era of digital transformation, medical innovation and more holistic, patient-centred care, modernisation is not merely about advanced technology, but begins with knowledge, skills and a progressive mindset.

"It is not just a slogan, but a call for change and a mandate for the future. We are at a crossroads, whether to remain with old practices or to move forward boldly towards a world-class healthcare system," she said.

Hanifah, who is Mukah MP, noted that medical assistants serve as a crucial link between the healthcare system and the community, especially in rural and remote areas of Sarawak.

She highlighted the profession's growing maturity, citing the development of research culture through the Journal of Malaysia Medical Assistants, and the adoption of evidence-based clinical practices.

"These initiatives reflect a strong commitment among medical assistants to ensure safe, high-quality services in line with international standards," she said.

Hanifah added that the ministry is currently reviewing a new bill to replace the existing Medical Assistants (Registration)

Act 1977, aimed at strengthening legal protection and elevating the profession.

"This demonstrates the government's seriousness in uplifting the status of medical assistants to a higher level."

She stressed that quality must never be compromised, noting that healthcare delivery encompasses efficiency, patient safety, empathy and integrity.

Medical assistants, she said, must continuously enhance their competencies through lifelong learning, ongoing training, and adherence to professional standards and ethics.

With rising challenges such as non-communicable diseases, mental health issues, and increasingly complex community healthcare needs, Hanifah said the role of medical assistants has become even more critical.

"I urge all medical assistants, especially in Sarawak, to strengthen preparedness, enhance collaboration across healthcare professions, and always prioritise patient well-being," she said.

KKM perkukuh bekalan ubat, peranti perubatan

PUTRAJAYA - Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) mempergiat langkah proaktif bagi memastikan keterjaminan bekalan ubat-ubatan dan peranti perubatan terus terjamin susulan impak krisis tenaga global.

Krisis berkenaan telah memberi kesan ketara kepada rantaian bekalan dunia, sekali gus menyebabkan ketidakstabilan akses serta gangguan penghantaran beberapa peranti perubatan kritikal, terutamanya bagi produk import kategori berisiko tinggi.

KKM dalam satu kenyataan pada Khamis memaklumkan, situasi tersebut turut menjejaskan keupayaan pembekal untuk me-

enuhi obligasi kontrak yang berpotensi menggugat kelangsungan perkhidmatan kesihatan awam jika tidak ditangani segera.

"KKM giat memastikan keterjaminan bekalan melalui pengukuhan stok penimbal bagi ubat dan peranti kritikal serta mempelbagaikan sumber bekalan.

"Pemantauan bahan mentah dan rantaian bekalan juga dilakukan secara berterusan bersama pihak industri bagi membolehkan risiko gangguan dikenal pasti lebih awal untuk ditangani secara bersasar," jelasnya.

Menurut kenyataan itu lagi, pengurusan bekalan kini dilaksanakan secara berhemah

melalui pengagihan berasaskan keperluan klinikal dan penggunaan yang rasional.

Langkah itu turut disokong dengan penyediaan pelan rawatan klinikal alternatif serta pemudahcara proses regulatori bagi memastikan akses ubat-ubatan tidak terputus.

"KKM turut melaksanakan Laluan Akses Khas (*Special Access Pathway*), pengaktifan pelan gerak balas kecemasan, penetapan item kawalan serta perluasan penggunaan e-Labeling bagi peranti perubatan," jelas kenyataan itu.

Bagi strategi jangka sederhana dan panjang, KKM memberikan tumpuan kepada

pengukuhan daya tahan bekalan menerusi peralihan penggunaan bahan resin kepada polimer serta pelaksanaan *Unique Device Identification* (UDI).

Selain itu, KKM juga menasarkankan pembangunan industri tempatan bagi peranti perubatan dan pembangunan dasar keterjaminan bekalan ubat melalui inisiatif MyMedSecure.

"Ini termasuklah pengukuhan pengeluaran tempatan, pendigitalan rantaian bekalan dan pewujudan stok penimbal strategik nasional bagi mendepani cabaran masa hadapan," menurut kementerian itu.