

Hunting for the best deals on medicines

By GERARD GIMINO
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PETALING JAYA: When it comes to medicines, Malaysians have a healthy habit – they are comparing prices to get the best deals and opting for generics where needed.

They also remain cautious of questionable online deals, with health taking priority over cost. Anand, 67, for one, has been using generic medicine for several years now.

“I was advised by my pharmacist and have never looked back. Although cheaper, the generics are just as effective,” he said.

Anand said opting for generics

also allows him to manage his healthcare expenses without compromising on treatment.

Housewife Linda Ling, 48, compares prices whenever she buys supplements.

Her usual purchases every two months include fish oil and multi-vitamins.

“I go to stores and compare similar products, and also brands. Every ringgit counts, but of course, our health is the priority,” she said.

Ling said she had also begun comparing prices over e-commerce platforms.

“Online, we can use vouchers to get lower prices. However, there have been instances when products seem much cheaper than

usual. Those raise red flags.

“We have to be careful and only purchase from legitimate stores online,” she said.

A sales manager, who wanted to be known only as Faizal, said convenience often influenced his purchases, especially for over-the-counter medication.

“Usually, I would just buy from the nearest pharmacy when I need medicines.

“However, for long-term items like supplements, I will check prices and brands,” he said.

He, too, is wary of online sales, despite the attractive discounts.

“Sometimes, the price difference is quite big, and that makes you wonder if the product is genuine. I’d rather pay slightly more

than risk buying something unsafe,” he said.

Business executive Aisyah Farid, 26, said affordability plays the biggest role when making supplement purchases.

“I usually ask for cheaper options or generics. As for supplements like vitamins, I try to wait for sales either online or in stores to get the best deal,” she said.

Aisyah, too, remains cautious when it comes to unfamiliar brands online.

“Sometimes, the deals just seem too good to be true.

“If unsure, I will do a quick online search to check the product’s authenticity. If not, I will check with the pharmacies themselves,” she said.

Price up, but not by much

Guild: Medicine cost hike due to routine annual review

By RAGANANTHINI VETHASALAM
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PETALING JAYA: Private pharmacies are seeing an increase in medicine prices, but they say the 5% to 10% hike is part of a routine annual price review.

Much of the price increase is due to manufacturers raising rates, rising supply chain costs, currency fluctuations and logistical expenses, said the Malaysian Community Pharmacy Guild.

“We are indeed seeing an upward trend in medicine prices in private pharmacies, but it is not a 30-40% increase as claimed.

“Price adjustments have largely hovered between 5% and 10%,” said guild president Sarah Abdullah.

She said the impact was most visible in imported and original branded medications.

“However, there are generic options that are more affordable,” she added.

She said the price increases were not limited to medicine, but also to other healthcare essentials like nutritional supplements and milk powders.



Cost factors: The guild says the price increase is driven by higher manufacturing costs, supply chain pressures, currency fluctuations and logistics expenses. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star

She said suppliers generally notify pharmacies of price changes a month in advance, allowing them to manage stock and advise patients accordingly.

“We want to reassure patients that medicines remain available. We advise the public not to engage in panic buying or overstocking, as this can create unnecessary pressure on the supply chain,” she said.

On Friday, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad had acknowledged that there had

been increases in medicine prices, as they are closely linked to industry factors and input costs such as oil, which has seen a huge price due to the conflict in the Middle East.

“As a result, the cost of medicines has risen. The increase is estimated to be around 30-40% in certain cases, and possibly higher for specific medical devices,” he said.

He said the cost issues began as early as March. The conflict began on Feb 28.

“There has been an increase of around 50% to 100% for certain devices,” Dzulkefly said, adding that the ministry had put on hold certain purchases.

The government has also implemented the Special Access Pathway to expedite the registration of medical devices.

“This approach is just an interim measure to deal with shortages and crisis situations,” he said, adding that there would be no compromise on the safety and quality of approved devices.

MDA: Over 300 medical device complaints last year

PUTRAJAYA: The Medical Device Authority (MDA) received more than 300 complaints related to medical devices in 2025, all of which were investigated and were followed by enforcement or legal actions against companies found to have breached regulations.

MDA chief executive officer Dr Muralitharan Paramasua said that by the end of 2025, a total of 10 companies were convicted for offences such as selling unregistered devices or operating without valid licences.

“The rest involved licence suspensions or revocations. These were among the enforcement measures we are intensifying,” he said after the MDA Excellent Service Awards 2025 yesterday.

Dr Muralitharan said among the most frequently reported products were contact lenses, thermometers, blood pressure monitors, catheters and syringes.

He stressed that all medical devices marketed in Malaysia must undergo stringent evaluation and verification by the MDA to ensure their safety.

Meanwhile, Dr Muralitharan said that the authority is also tightening surveillance on e-commerce platforms, which have emerged as a key avenue for distributing unregistered products.

“MDA will continue to intensify monitoring and enforcement against any party selling unregistered medical devices or operating without a valid licence, to ensure consumer safety is protected at all times,” he said, Bernama reported.

He also encouraged the public to report any suspicious sales activities involving medical devices as part of a collective effort to safeguard public health.

At the event, Dr Muralitharan also expressed appreciation to the media for helping raise awareness of MDA’s role and the importance of medical device registration.

“The media plays a crucial role, as their coverage has helped the public better understand that all medical devices must be registered and purchased from authorised representatives,” he said.



YOUR OPINION

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Letters must carry the sender's full name,
address and telephone number.
A pseudonym may be included.

I WOULD like to share how a small effort by a big hospital can help Malaysia's growing number of diabetics.

As everyone knows Malaysia faces a growing public health challenge with diabetes, a condition that requires not only medical treatment but also – and crucially – ongoing management of diet, lifestyle, and preventive care.

Yet during a recent visit to a hospital, I observed facilities and services for diabetic patients remain inadequate, highlighting a gap that demands urgent policy attention.

To begin with, the meals and food options available to visitors and patients in the hospital's canteen were largely unsuitable for diabetic management – high in sugar, oil, and refined carbohydrates.

While hospitals spend millions on providing medical care for diabetic patients, can they not pay a little attention to ensuring that everyday support for proper diet and self-care is available? This disconnect undermines patient health outcomes and contradicts the principles of comprehensive care.

Equally concerning is the absence of dedicated retail or resource outlets offering diabetic-friendly products. From what I've seen, public hospitals rarely provide access to essential items such as low glycaemic

Hospitals can do more to support long-term wellness



foods, sugar-free alternatives, proper diabetic footwear, foot-care products, or basic monitoring devices like glucose meters and blood sugar test strips. These are not luxuries; they are critical for preventing complications such as foot ulcers or hospital readmissions which carry significant costs for both patients and

the healthcare system.

Such support services can be outsourced to the private sector, allowing an entrepreneur to operate a stall at the hospitals. These stall operators can source materials suitable for diabetics and offer them for sale to patients and visitors alike.

From a policy perspective, hos-

pitals are uniquely positioned to address these gaps. Allocating a portion of ground-floor retail space to outlets specialising in diabetic support – covering appropriate food, snacks, footwear, and monitoring devices – would provide patients with immediate access to essential resources.

This initiative could be complemented by educational programmes within the same space, reinforcing long-term behavioural changes that reduce complications and healthcare costs.

Implementing such measures aligns with the broader objectives of public health policy: improving patient outcomes, reducing preventable complications, and promoting a holistic approach to care.

Hospitals should move beyond the narrow focus of treatment alone and integrate preventive support into their operational and retail planning. Even small steps, such as curating diabetic-friendly food options or providing on-site monitoring

devices, can have a measurable impact on patient health and long-term cost savings.

I urge the Health Ministry and all public hospital administrators to consider policy reforms that embed diabetic patient support into hospital services. Ensuring access to suitable food, footwear, and monitoring tools is a practical, achievable step that reinforces medical care and empowers patients to manage their condition effectively.

Hospitals should be environments that not only treat illness but actively support recovery and long-term wellness. It is time to implement policies that make this vision a reality for diabetic patients across Malaysia.

The above can be done by hospitals if they are proactive. Besides, there is no cost to them and they can earn rental income from these outlets. A win-win, as they say!

KR PUNITHAN

Secretary
Klang Consumer Association

Over 300 medical device complaints addressed

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Its chief executive Dr Muralitharan Paramasua said by the end of the year, approximately 10 companies were convicted for offences such as selling unregistered devices or operating without valid licences.

"The rest involved licence suspensions or revocations. These were among the enforcement measures we are intensifying," he said after the MDA Excellent Service Awards 2025 yesterday.

He added that among the most frequently reported products were contact lenses, thermometers, blood pressure monitors, catheters and syringes, and consumable items.

He emphasised that all medical devices marketed in Malaysia must undergo stringent evaluation and verification by the MDA to ensure their safety, especially for patient use.

Muralitharan said the authority is also paying close attention to online sales channels, which have emerged as a key avenue for the distribution of unregistered products.

"MDA will continue to intensify monitoring and enforcement against any party selling unregistered medical devices or operating without a valid licence, to ensure consumer safety is protected at all times"

He also encouraged the public to report any suspicious sales activities involving medical devices as part of a collective effort to safeguard public health.

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"The media plays a crucial role, as their coverage has helped the public better understand that all medical devices must be registered and purchased from authorised representatives."

– Bernama

Trending six-second sleep therapy sparks alarm

➤ Health Ministry warns of stroke, brain damage and death as experts debunk unsafe, unproven practice

KUALA LUMPUR: A wellness trend making waves on social media has drawn serious warnings from the Health Ministry, with medical experts cautioning that what is being marketed as “six-second sleep therapy” poses life-threatening risks including stroke, permanent brain damage and death.

The technique has gained traction among Malaysians seeking relief from everyday stress, fatigue and sleep difficulties, often promoted through viral content and celebrity endorsements. However, the enthusiasm surrounding the trend has alarmed health authorities and medical professionals who say the practice has no clinical basis whatsoever.

Neurologist Dr Ahmad Shahir Mawardi from Kuala Lumpur Hospital explained that the procedure works by applying pressure to the carotid arteries – the major blood vessels on either side of the neck responsible for delivering oxygen and nutrients to the brain. Compressing these vessels cuts off blood supply, inducing a state of cerebral hypoperfusion (inadequate circulation of blood to body tissues) that causes the individual to appear unconscious or experience seizure-like movements. When the pressure is released, blood flow resumes and consciousness returns.

He noted that the word “carotid” itself traces back to the ancient Greek term *karoun*, meaning to fall into deep sleep or to stupefy, a link observed by physicians as far back as antiquity. What practitioners are describing as therapeutic rest, he said, is medically nothing more than a fainting episode caused by interrupted circulation to the brain.

“This is not healthy sleep. It is fainting. And that distinction is what makes this therapy extremely dangerous.”

From a clinical standpoint, Shahir explained to Bernama that there is no evidence the therapy can address any of the conditions it claims to treat, including stress, hypertension or insomnia. On the contrary, he outlined a range of serious complications that can result from the procedure – sudden loss of consciousness, carotid artery injury, cardiac arrhythmia, cerebral hypoxia, seizures, stroke and death.

Of particular concern are the baroreceptors in the carotid sinus, which regulate blood pressure and cardiovascular balance. Artificially disrupting blood pressure signals can trigger the heart to overcompensate, posing acute risks for individuals with undetected heart conditions.

“This can lead to heart failure, irregular heartbeat and even death,” he warned, adding that brain tissue can suffer irreversible damage after as little as four minutes without adequate oxygen supply.

The neck also contains intricate nerve structures beyond the blood vessels, meaning the risks extend well beyond circulatory disruption alone.

Not everyone is convinced by the warnings.

Therapy practitioner Noordin Mohd Azmi, who has five years of experience treating nerve-related conditions, argued that “six-second sleep” is simply a popular label for a long-established technique in traditional alternative medicine. He said different practitioners use different names for broadly similar methods aimed at stimulating the nervous system and improving blood flow.

According to Noordin, clients frequently report feeling lighter, more energised and relieved of symptoms such as head heaviness, blurred vision and neck tension following treatment. He acknowledged, however, that results are subjective and vary between individuals.

Critically, he also conceded that the procedure carries genuine risks when carried out by inexperienced hands and urged prospective clients to exercise caution.

“If you are unsure or doubtful, don’t proceed.”

Shahir was unequivocal in his advice: anyone considering the therapy should consult a qualified doctor first. He confirmed the practice is not recognised under Malaysia’s Traditional and Complementary Medicine Act 2016 nor does it form part of any accepted modern or traditional medical framework.

Rather than pursuing unverified treatments, he recommended clinically supported approaches to improving sleep and managing stress, centred on good sleep hygiene – establishing consistent routines and environments that promote genuine, restorative rest.

“If these measures fail, seek treatment from a medical specialist.”

Stroke on the rise among young adults



A significant proportion of working adults report psychological stress and fatigue linked to workplace demands, which indirectly increases cardiovascular risk. PICTURE CREDIT: CREATIVEART — FREEPIK



SIX stroke cases are reported every hour in Malaysia and around 52,000 cases annually, according to the Malaysia Stroke Council and Malaysian Society of Neurosciences.

One in four Malaysians will suffer a stroke by 2040 if no preventive action is taken, according to the Global Burden of Disease Stroke Statistics Worldwide Survey in 2016.

Stroke remains the third leading cause of death in Malaysia, with a significant and growing neurological burden nationwide, says Ampang Puteri Specialist Hospital neurosurgeon Dr Kuha Raj Arumugam.

Epidemiological research also shows a worrying shift towards younger

age groups, he adds. Stroke incidence among adults aged 35 to 39 has increased by about 53.3 per cent in men and 50.4 in women, reflecting the rising impact of lifestyle-related vascular risk factors, he says.

"In the neurosurgical operating theatre, stroke is no longer seen only in elderly patients. Increasingly, young professionals in their 30s and 40s are presenting with life threatening brain emergencies linked to chronic stress, hypertension and untreated vascular risk factors."

Severe stroke cases causing brain swelling or intracranial bleeding often require urgent neurosurgical intervention to prevent permanent disability or mortality.

From a neurosurgical perspective, many of the most severe cases involve brain haemorrhage, malignant swelling or aneurysm rupture, conditions that may require urgent interventions or surgery to salvage brain function.

Dr Kuha says national stroke guidelines emphasise prevention and early treatment as many patients present without prior warning signs.

Increasingly, neurosurgeons are treating younger adults with complications related to uncontrolled hypertension and prolonged stress, he adds.

"Chronic workplace stress contributes to sustained elevation of blood pressure, poor sleep quality and metabolic imbalance."

These factors increase the risk of both ischaemic and haemorrhagic stroke.

OVERWORKED AND MENTALLY DRAINED

Dr Kuha explains that burnout is becoming a major health concern across Southeast Asia.

Recent peer-reviewed research shows that a significant proportion of working adults report psychological stress and fatigue linked to workplace demands, which indirectly increases cardiovascular risk.

"Patients frequently present late because symptoms such as headaches, dizziness or fatigue are mistaken for work stress rather than early neurological warning signs."

Malaysia continues to face high levels



Dr Kuha Raj Arumugam. PICTURE CREDIT: AMPANG PUTERI SPECIALIST HOSPITAL

of vascular risk factors. Cardiovascular disease remains a leading contributor to mortality, with hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol strongly associated with stroke risk.

Elevated blood pressure can weaken blood vessels in the brain over time, increasing the likelihood of intracranial haemorrhage or aneurysm rupture. Many young professionals are unaware of these silent risks until severe neurological complications develop.

"They believe it will never happen to them. However, in neurosurgery we are seeing more patients in their working years presenting with serious neurological emergencies."

Awareness and early screening are crucial to prevent devastating outcomes.

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WHEN STROKE BECOMES A NEUROSURGICAL EMERGENCY

Not all strokes require surgery. Neurosurgical intervention may be necessary in cases involving:

- Intractable brain swelling
- Bleeding with significant mass effect
- A ruptured or expanding aneurysm
- Hydrocephalus which develops after a stroke

Rapid referral to specialised centres significantly improves survival and recovery outcomes.

RECOGNISING EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Never ignore sudden neurological symptoms, especially when they're combined with stress or known hypertension.

These symptoms include:

- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- Difficulty speaking or understanding speech
- Severe sudden headache
- Loss of balance or blurred vision

Immediate assessment allows doctors to determine whether emergency neurosurgical care is required.

PROTECTING BRAIN HEALTH

Prevention is always preferable to emergency surgery so take the necessary steps.

- **Monitor blood pressure regularly**
Hypertension remains one of the strongest modifiable risk factors for stroke.
- **Manage stress early**
Physical activity, structured breaks and mental health support help stabilise vascular health.
- **Seek medical advice promptly**
Persistent headaches or neurological symptoms should not be ignored.



Many young professionals are unaware of the silent risks until severe neurological complications develop. PICTURE CREDIT: TIRACHARDZ — FREEPIK

Label hologram tidak berfungsi cetus risiko produk kesihatan palsu

Kegagalan sistem pengesahan timbul kebimbangan, buka ruang masuk pasaran tanpa dikesan

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Kuala Lumpur: Kegagalan sistem pengesahan label hologram keselamatan, khususnya bagi produk kesihatan sejak beberapa bulan kebelakangan ini, mencetuskan kebimbangan serius terhadap risiko kemasukan ubat-ubatan dan makanan tambahan tidak tulen ke pasaran.

Pengurus Besar Techno Secure Print Sdn Bhd (Techno Secure Print), Fairuz Yahya, berkata kelemahan pada label hologram yang digunakan menyebabkan pengguna serta pihak berkuasa tidak dapat mengesan ketulenan produk walaupun ia mem-

punyai tanda keselamatan.

Beliau berkata, dalam tempoh kira-kira empat hingga lima bulan selepas pembekalan label itu dilaksanakan oleh sebuah syarikat tempatan yang dilantik kerajaan, label berkenaan didapati tidak boleh diimbas menggunakan peranti biasa.

"Dalam tempoh itu, tidak mustahil wujud kelompokan dari segi keselamatan apabila pengguna tidak mempunyai cara untuk memastikan sama ada produk dibeli adalah tulen atau sebaliknya.

"Ia termasuk ubat bagi penyakit kronik seperti kencing manis dan darah tinggi. Sekiranya tidak tulen, ia boleh memberi kesan serius kepada kesihatan.

"Secara tidak langsung, keadaan ini membuka ruang kepada kemasukan produk tidak sah ke pasaran tanpa dapat dikesan oleh pengguna mahupun pihak penguat kuasa," katanya.

Sebelum ini, *BH* melaporkan keputusan kerajaan menganugerahkan tender pengeluaran label keselamatan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) kepada sebuah syarikat yang mengimport sepenuhnya label dari luar negara me-

nimbulkan kebimbangan pelbagai pihak.

Sebelum tender baharu itu, Techno Secure Print adalah pembekal label hologram sejak 2019 dan turut membangunkan sistem keselamatan digital melalui aplikasi Farma Checker bagi membantu kerajaan mengekang penularan ubat tiruan di pasaran.

Gagal imbas maklumat

Menerusi aplikasi itu, katanya, pihaknya menerima banyak aduan daripada orang awam yang gagal mengimbas maklumat pada produk yang dibeli.

“Kerajaan disaran menilai semula pelaksanaan pembekalan label berkenaan sebelum ia dimuktamadkan bagi memastikan keselamatan pengguna terus terjamin”

Fairuz Yahya,
Pengurus Besar Techno Secure Print

Mengulas lanjut, Fairuz berkata, beliau mengesyaki syarikat yang diberikan tender itu menjalin kerjasama dengan pengilang luar negara yang mempunyai kaitan dengan teknologi digunakan sebelum ini.

"Pada awalnya, label tidak boleh diimbas dan hanya selepas beberapa bulan dianugerahkan barulah ia berfungsi semula.

"Jika benar terdapat kerjasama tanpa kawalan atau pematuhan kepada perjanjian asal, ia boleh menimbulkan isu integriti serta keselamatan sistem pelabelan.

"Ia juga menunjukkan syarikat

berkenaan tidak mempunyai keupayaan dan kredibiliti untuk memenuhi syarat ketat yang ditetapkan," katanya.

Beliau berkata, walaupun label hologram sedia ada kelihatan sah, kegagalan sistem pengesahan sebelum ini menjadikannya tidak mempunyai nilai dari sudut keselamatan, malah berpotensi mengelirukan dan membahayakan pengguna.

"Aspek keselamatan, khususnya membabitkan ubat-ubatan, tidak seharusnya dikompromi. Jika berlaku kesan buruk seperti komplikasi kesihatan atau kematian akibat penggunaan produk tidak tulen, persoalan tanggungjawab pasti timbul.

"Justeru, kerajaan disaran menilai semula pelaksanaan pembekalan label berkenaan sebelum ia dimuktamadkan bagi memastikan keselamatan pengguna terus terjamin," katanya.

Orang ramai turut dinasihatkan berhati-hati ketika membeli produk kesihatan, menggunakan aplikasi Farma Checker untuk tujuan pengesahan, serta mengelak menggunakan produk yang diragui ketulenannya.



Pelajar dilanggar di hadapan surau sekolah kini stabil

Kota Bharu: Pelajar perempuan yang parah selepas dilanggar sebuah kenderaan yang dipandu seorang wanita di hadapan surau Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Tanjung Mas, kelmarin mengalami beberapa kecederaan pada bahagian kepala serta muka.

Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Kelantan (JKNK), Datuk Dr Mohd Azman Yacob berkata, mangsa, Zara Akhtar Zamzuri, 13, kini dirawat di Hospital Raja Perempuan Zainab II (HRPZ II) dan berada dalam keadaan sedar serta stabil.

Katanya, pihaknya akan terus memastikan pesakit menerima rawatan yang terbaik serta pemantauan rapi sehingga pulih sepenuhnya tanpa sebarang komplikasi.

"Sehubungan itu, kami berharap semua pihak dapat bersama-sama mendoakan kesejahteraan mangsa.

"Pada masa sama, memandangkan kes ini masih dalam siasatan pihak polis, kami memohon agar semua pihak tidak

membuat sebarang spekulasi atau menyebarkan maklumat yang tidak sahih berhubung kejadian ini," katanya menerusi satu kenyataan media, semalam.

Sementara itu, tinjauan di SMK Tanjung Mas mendapati sesi persekolahan berjalan seperti biasa semalam selepas tempoh insiden itu.

Suasana sunyi di hadapan sekolah dan beberapa pekerja sekolah dan pengawal keselamatan sedang bertugas manakala pelajar berada di kelas masing-masing.

Bagaimanapun, usaha meninjau kawasan surau berkenaan tidak berhasil kerana orang luar tidak dibenarkan masuk ke kawasan sekolah dan surau berkenaan ia boleh dilihat dari hadapan sekolah.

Difahamkan surau berkenaan ditutup dan pengawal keselamatan juga tidak membenarkan orang luar masuk dengan bahagian depan pagar ditutup dengan palang.

Sementara itu, peniaga makanan hanya mahu dikenali sebagai Mohamad, 53, berkata sesi persekolahan nampaknya berjalan seperti biasa.



Sesi persekolahan di SMK Tanjung Mas, Kota Bharu berjalan seperti biasa dengan kawalan diperketat ketika tinjauan semalam. (Nik Abdullah Nik Omar/BH)

Katanya, guru-guru dan pelajar hadir ke sekolah serta mereka belajar seperti biasa walaupun warga sekolah sedang berduka dengan kejadian yang berlaku.

"Satu sekolah bersedih hari ini (semalam). Begitu juga dengan saya yang turut bersimpati dengan kejadian kerana menyebabkan kematian seorang pelajar perempuan.

"Kalau kes cedera pun kita sudah bimbang, inikan pula membabitkan kematian. Sema-

lam, suasana di kawasan sekolah ini agak sibuk.

"Ramai yang datang termasuk polis, orang Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri (JPN) atau Kementerian Pendidikan. Ramai ambil berat mengenai kejadian ini," katanya ketika ditemui di luar sekolah, semalam.



Dr Mohd Azman Yacob