

# China deal ensures stable medical device supply, says Dzulkefly



**ISKANDAR PUTERI:** The country's medical device supply will remain stable despite the Middle East conflict following a deal inked with China, says Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (pic).

He said the ministry's Medical Device Authority (MDA) had signed a memorandum of understanding with China to ensure the supply of raw materials for use by the Malaysian industry.

"Raw materials are crucial for us to continue producing medical products without interruption.

"With the deal, there are no issues that will lead to supply disruption or delays," he told reporters during a Hari Raya open house here yesterday at Dewanraya Taman Bukit Indah.

Dzulkefly said the government's current focus is to ensure that the supply of raw materials is sufficient.

"This initiative aims to ensure the supply of raw materials remains adequate at all times, thereby allowing the production of medical devices to continue without disruption."

For now, he said that other matters are under negotiation.

"The government is prioritising the security of supply first. Pricing matters are still being negotiated based on a 'willing buyer, willing seller' concept," he said.

On Friday, the ministry said that it had signed an agreement with China to boost supplies of resin and naphtha, which are key raw materials in the production of medical devices.

Dr Dzulkefly had previously said the ministry is monitoring the rising prices of medicines and medical devices, which have increased by up to 40% following the global energy crisis caused by the Middle East conflict.

# A breakthrough in gene therapy

## Dr Thein becomes first Malaysian-born scientist to win 'Science Oscar'

By EMALIN ZALANI  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Consultant haematologist Dr Thein Swee Lay has won one of the six 2026 Breakthrough Prizes – the first Malaysian-born scientist to do so.

Dr Thein is the first Malaysian-born scientist to receive the award, dubbed the "Oscars of Science".

The US National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Sickle Cell Branch chief and senior investigator shared one of the three Life Sciences prizes with Harvard Medical School David G. Nathan Distinguished Professor of Paediatrics Dr Stuart H. Orkin.

Each prize comes with a cash award of US\$3mil (RM12mil) – the largest for scientific achievements.

Dr Thein was recognised for discovering the gene B-cell lymphoma/leukaemia 11A (BCL11A), which has been identified as a key regulator of fetal haemoglobin production.

Prof Orkin also separately discovered the gene, as well as demonstrated how it acts as a "switch", controlling the transition from fetal to adult haemoglobin.

This breakthrough laid the foundation for gene-editing therapies for sickle cell disease and beta-thalassaemia – two inherited blood disorders that affect an estimated nine million people worldwide.

Dr Thein described the recognition as a significant honour.

"To be the first Malaysian to receive this recognition is not just a personal milestone – it belongs to everyone who believed in me, mentored me and to the country that shaped me," said the Universiti Malaya medical graduate.

"I hope it will send a message to young people in Malaysia and across South-East Asia that their background does not define what they can achieve.

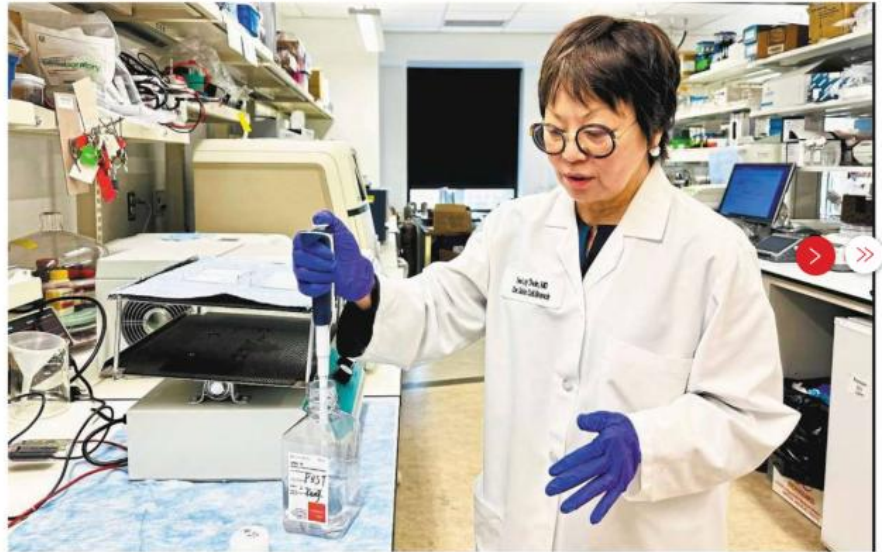
"Only their dedication and hunger to ask the next question does."

She added that her greatest fulfilment came from knowing her work might one day ease patients' suffering.

"Every setback at the (lab) bench reminded me how long the road to discovering BCL11A was," she said.

"That memory pulls me back, driven by the quiet hope that the treatments we were developing would one day make a difference to patients I might never meet."

Looking ahead, she hopes to help develop new drugs, particularly those that can prevent or abort severe pain crises in sickle cell patients.



**Success is in her blood:** A handout photo showing Dr Thein working in her lab at the US National Institutes of Health in Washington DC.

"We are closer than ever to therapies that not only manage the disease but also allow patients to live alongside it," she said.

"With effective treatment, education and self-care, many patients can achieve a good quality of life, and that prospect gets me back into the lab every morning."

Dr Thein also previously received the 2024 Shaw Prize in Life Science and Medicine for the same discovery.

The other three Breakthrough Prizes went to researchers in physics and mathematics.

In addition, 15 early-career physicists and mathematicians shared six US\$100,000 (RM395,165)

New Horizons Prizes.

Three women mathematicians who had recently completed their PhDs also each received a US\$50,000 (RM197,583) Maryam Mirzakhani New Frontiers Prize.

**See StarHealth for more on Dr Thein next Sunday (April 26)**

# Why a GMP certification matters

This assures consumers that a health product meets established safety and high-quality standards.

## KNOW YOUR MEDICINES

By NAJWA SYAHIRAH SAFIAH

THE Malaysian Statistics on Medicines 2018–2022 report revealed a clear trend as more people are turning to modern medicine and recognising the importance of consuming safer, higher-quality health products.

Led by the Health Ministry's (MOH) Pharmaceutical Services Programme, the report delves into total medicine use in Malaysia, patterns and trends in utilisation.

In 2020, the public sector accounted for over 60% of total medicine utilisation, marking a 9.44% increase compared to 2019.

The private sector also reported steady growth in medicine utilisation over the five-year period, with an increase of more than 21.3% in 2021 compared to 2020.

As demand continues to rise, ensuring quality production has become a top priority for manufacturers.

Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certification plays a vital role in achieving this objective.

But what exactly is GMP, and why is it crucial for the production of high-quality health products?



GMP standards cover all aspects of production, including manufacturing facilities, equipment, workforce, documentation and quality control processes. — Freepik



All health products registered with the Health Ministry must have a valid MAL registration number or hologram security label. — REVATHI MURUGAPPAN/The Star



Online platforms, especially social media networks, have now birthed a new online marketplace of drugs, especially counterfeit pills. — DEA/Flicker

## Understanding GMP

GMP refers to a quality assurance system that ensures medicinal products are consistently manufactured and controlled to meet appropriate quality standards for their intended use.

In essence, GMP comprises a set of guidelines and regulatory requirements designed to ensure the consistent quality, safety and efficacy of health products.

These standards cover all aspects of production, including manufacturing facilities, equipment, workforce, documentation and quality control processes.

In practice, GMP ensures that products are manufactured according to the quality standards required for their intended use.

Without proper controls, manufacturing operations may jeopardise consumer health and safety.

Therefore, a GMP certificate assures consumers that a product meets established safety and quality standards, thereby building confidence in the health products marketed.

From a regulatory perspective, the Control of Drugs and Cosmetics Regulations (CDCR) 1984 clearly state that adherence to GMP is a mandatory requirement for obtaining a manufacturer's licence, as well as for product registration or cosmetic notification.

In Malaysia, the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) acts as the secretariat to the Drug Control Authority (DCA) and is responsible for ensuring that all manufacturers of registered products in Malaysia provide satisfactory evidence that their manufactur-

ing facilities comply with current GMP standards.

The NPRA is the regulatory body responsible for conducting GMP inspections.

## Meeting GMP standards

To comply with the requirements, local manufacturers intending to produce registered products within GMP-compliant facilities may either establish their own factories or engage contract manufacturers that meet GMP standards.

The facility must be licensed by the relevant authorities, including the local town council, the Department of Environment and the Fire and Rescue Department.

In addition, a GMP certificate, which is primarily issued to facilitate the export of locally manufactured registered products, serves as proof of compliance with current GMP requirements.

This certification is often required by overseas regulatory bodies for product registration in their respective countries.

To obtain this certificate, applications must be submitted online via the QUEST3+ system, which can be accessed through the official NPRA website at [www.npra.gov.my](http://www.npra.gov.my).

A certification fee of RM50 has been set by the NPRA for this purpose.

According to the CDCR 1984, the manufacturing and quality control standards of medicinal products produced outside Malaysia must be evaluated before the products can be registered in the country.

Consequently, overseas manufacturers are required to undergo GMP conformity assessments, either by providing acceptable GMP evidence or through GMP inspections.

The Product Registration Holder (PRH) must provide satisfactory evidence to prove that the manufacturer follows an internationally accepted standard of GMP recognised by the NPRA.

Non-compliance with GMP standards can have serious consequences.

Health product manufacturers that fail to meet GMP requirements may face rejection of new product registration applications, denial of registration renewal, or suspension of currently registered products.

Furthermore, the manufacturer's licence may be revoked by the Director of Pharmaceutical Services, in accordance with Regulation 17(1) of the CDCR 1984.

## Advice to public

Given the serious risks posed by unregistered products, it is crucial to adopt careful practices when selecting health products.

To ensure safety, consumers should ensure that the products they purchase are registered with the NPRA.

Registered health products have undergone a stringent evaluation process to confirm that they meet safety standards, including the GMP certification of the manufacturing facility.

Choosing registered products significantly reduces the risk of exposure to adulterated or contaminated items, ensuring that medicines are both safe and effective for consumption.

Consumers should verify that health products have a valid MAL registration number or hologram security label, which indicates that the products are registered with MOH.

The registration status can be checked via the NPRA's official website.

Meanwhile, the authenticity of the hologram security label can be verified using the MyUBAT or FarmaChecker mobile application, depending on the version of the hologram security label.

Consumers should also be wary and avoid being misled by advertisements from suspicious sellers, particularly those promoted online.

Health products obtained from unverified sources, such as street vendors or unregulated online marketplaces, may be dangerous or of substandard quality.

In summary, GMP is essential to ensure the consistent production of high-quality health products.

By adhering to GMP standards, manufacturers safeguard the quality, safety and efficacy of their products, thereby protecting consumers and strengthening public trust.

Ultimately, consumers are encouraged to choose only health products that are properly registered and meet regulatory requirements, including those manufactured in GMP-certified facilities, to ensure the products used are safe, effective and of high quality.

**Najwa Syahirah Safiah is a pharmacist with the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA). This article is courtesy of the Health Ministry's Pharmacy Practice and Development Division. For more information, email [starhealth@thestar.com.my](mailto:starhealth@thestar.com.my). The information provided is for educational and communication purposes only, and should not be considered as medical advice. The Star does not give any warranty on accuracy, completeness, functionality, usefulness or other assurances as to the content appearing in this article. The Star disclaims all responsibility for any losses, damage to property or personal injury suffered directly or indirectly from reliance on such information.**

# Low dental care uptake among seniors despite outreach efforts



Jenifer Laeng

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**MIRI:** The utilisation of dental services among senior citizens in Sarawak remains low, with only 11.6 per cent seeking treatment at government facilities last year, while just 29.2 per cent retain at least 20 functional teeth.

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Creative Industry and Arts Datuk Sebastian Ting said despite ongoing efforts by the Dental Health Division of the Sarawak Health Department to improve access through primary care and outreach programmes,

uptake remains limited.

Citing data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia, he noted that the country is projected to become an 'aged nation' by 2030, with 15.3 per cent of the population aged 60 and above.

"In this regard, the 6020 Campaign, themed 'At 60, at least 20 teeth', is a strategic initiative by the Ministry of Health under the National Oral Health Strategic Plan 2022-2030.

"The aim is to ensure that by 2030, more than 50 per cent of those aged 60 and above will retain at least 20 functional natural teeth," he said in a speech for the launch of the 6020 Campaign and the state-level World Oral Health Day celebration here yesterday.

Ting's speech was delivered by Kapitan Aries Leong Chin Lim.

The Piasau assemblyman highlighted that many senior citizens still lack sufficient teeth



Leong (second right) presents an award to Lire Laing, one of five recipients of the 'Anugerah Khas Mulut Sihat'.

for daily function, affecting their quality of life.

He added that the Sarawak Health Department remains committed to expanding services and intensifying oral health promotion despite challenges such as geographical constraints, limited access and low public awareness.

"Currently, the state has 53 dental clinics, eight mobile dental clinics, 151 school dental clinics, and 107 mobile dental teams.

"Through these facilities, about 697,480 people, or 27.7 per cent of Sarawak's population, benefited from government dental health services in 2025," he said.

On the campaign, Ting described it is an important global awareness initiative, noting that this year's theme 'A Happy Mouth Is a Happy Life' underscores the role of good oral

health in enabling individuals to eat, drink and communicate with confidence.

Meanwhile, Sarawak Health Department deputy director (Dental) Dr Misah Md Ramli said the campaign serves as a platform to raise public awareness and promote healthier behaviours.

"With increasing life expectancy, dental health must be prioritised throughout the lifespan, with emphasis on prevention, early detection and consistent self-care.

"These efforts require collaboration from various stakeholders, including government agencies, the private sector, educational institutions and local communities," she said.

Also present were Malaysia Dental Association Eastern Zone chairlady Dr Karen Voon Kai Rou, and Miri Division dental officer Dr Khairul Fikri Sebri.

# Zara Aftar jalani pembedahan Isnin

## Mangsa kedua dirempuh kereta guru masih dirawat

Oleh HAZELEN LIANA KAMARUDIN

**KOTA BHARU** - Mangsa kedua insiden dirempuh kereta yang dipercayai dipandu seorang guru di hadapan surau Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Tanjong Mas di sini pada 12 April lalu dijangka menjalani satu lagi pembedahan membabitkan prosedur tampalan kulit pada bahagian cuping telinga di Hospital Raja Perempuan Zainab II (HRPZ II) pada Isnin ini.

Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Kelantan (JKNK), Datuk Dr Mohd Azman Yacob berkata, prosedur berkenaan akan dilakukan pakar bedah plastik selepas ke-



MOHD AZMAN

adaan luka pelajar Tingkatan Satu, Zara Aftar Zamzuri, 13, menunjukkan perkembangan positif.

Menurut beliau, sebelum ini pelajar terbabit telah menjalani pembedahan patah tulang kaki serta rawatan luka pada muka dan telinga minggu lalu.

"Alhamdulillah, pembedahan terdahulu berjalan dengan baik dan beliau kini

telah dipindahkan ke Wad 10 iaitu wad kelas pertama di HRPZ II.

"Untuk minggu ini, perancangan seterusnya ialah melakukan prosedur grafting atau tampalan pada bahagian cuping telinga yang tercedera," katanya kepada pemberita ketika ditemui pada Majlis Perasmian Terminal Baharu Lapangan Terbang Sultan Ismail Petra (LTSIP)

Pengkalan Chepa di sini pada Sabtu.

Menurut beliau, kecederaan pada telinga mangsa agak serius kerana bahagian tersebut koyak selain dipenuhi kotoran jalan raya dan tar di lokasi kejadian.

Ujarnya, pembedahan pertama sebelum ini melibatkan proses pembersihan menyeluruh bagi membuang kotoran serta tisu rosak sebelum rawatan lanjut dapat dilakukan.

Dr Mohd Azman memberitahu, selepas luka bersih dan pertumbuhan tisu baharu menunjukkan perkembangan baik, barulah prosedur tampalan boleh dibuat.

Dalam pada itu, beliau berkata, pihak hospital turut memberi tumpuan terhadap aspek emosi Zara susulan trauma dialami mangsa.

Menurutnya, pasukan perubatan telah memulakan Psychological First Aid (PFA) atau Bantuan Awal Psikologi kepada mangsa serta ahli keluarganya secara berperingkat.

"Pakar psikiatri kanak-kanak juga terlibat untuk memastikan emosi beliau kembali stabil selepas kejadian yang berlaku secara tiba-tiba," katanya.

Ujar beliau, Zara dijangka masih perlu berada di hospital untuk tempoh agak lama bagi memastikan semua luka sembuh sepenuhnya serta mengelakkan risiko jangkitan kuman terutama pada bahagian muka dan telinga.



Laporan Sinar Harian pada Selasa lalu.