

## Health Ministry sets toothy grin target for seniors by 2030

**KUALA SELANGOR:** At least half of senior citizens in the country should have some 20 natural teeth by 2030, says Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (pic).

The Health Minister said this target is in line with National Oral Health Strategic Plan 2022-2030 set by the ministry for senior citizens.

Based on the National Oral Health Survey of Adults 2020, only 34.3% of senior citizens have at least 20 natural teeth, while 13.9% experience oral functional

limitations that affect their quality of life, he said.

"Teeth are the gateway to the body. We want to ensure this gateway continues to function and protect against various risks, including infections and food-related issues, which are very important.

"I have stressed that there is no health without oral health, as it reflects the crucial role of dental



health in maintaining overall well-being," he said when met after launching the 6020 Campaign and the National-level Kembara Senyuman 2026 programme here yesterday, Bernama reported.

To ensure the target is achieved, he said the ministry will roll out the Kembara Senyuman initiative nationwide, offering services such as denture

provision directly to communities, care centres and rural areas.

He added that 3D digital technology (3DDT) will be used in the initiative to produce high-quality dentures quickly, ensuring that no one is left behind in accessing oral healthcare.

Dzulkefly noted that the initiative is among the government's proactive measures in addressing the challenges of an ageing population.

He said the latest statistics showed that those aged 65 and

above accounted for 8% of the population in 2025.

"Outreach programmes or approaches that extend services to rural areas are crucial to ensure no one is left behind, particularly among vulnerable or high-risk groups.

"We want to ensure that healthcare services and care continue to be delivered comprehensively, with a focus on senior citizens, the infirm, persons with disabilities, as well as those living in remote areas," he said.

## Experts: PFAS can manifest into health hazard over time

**PETALING JAYA:** "Forever chemicals" are already in our water and sewage systems and may manifest into a health hazard, say experts.

"You can't see, smell or taste them, but they can slowly build up in your body over time," says Dr Mohd Yusmaidie Aziz from Universiti Sains Malaysia's Pusat Kanser Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Department of Toxicology.

He said forever chemicals, called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), do not break down easily.

"It has been used for many years because they are very good at repelling water, oil and heat," he said.

Mohd Yusmaidie said the chemicals were found on items such as non-stick pans, waterproof jackets, fast food packaging, cosmetics and firefighting foam.

"Because we use them so much, these chemicals have spread into our water, food and even our bodies without us realising it.

"A famous case in the United States, known as the DuPont C8 case, showed how these chemicals contaminated drinking water for years and affected thousands of people. It was one of the first major warnings to the world," he said.

In Malaysia, he said studies have already found PFAS in rivers and water sources, seafood, human blood and breast milk,

adding that it was likely that people were being exposed to low levels of the chemicals.

The chemicals, he said, could lead to hormone problems (like thyroid issues), high cholesterol, weak immune system, fertility problems and even cancer.

"Research in Malaysia is ongoing but early findings suggest that this is something we should not ignore," he added.

Mohd Yusmaidie was part of the team which published a research paper last year on the presence of PFAS in sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Penang.

Researchers tested 17 types of PFAS in water coming into and leaving 10 treatment plants that serve about 700,000 people in

the state.

They found the highest levels of two chemicals in the water coming into the plants.

After treatment, the levels of the chemicals were reduced. Eight out of the 10 plants were able to remove more than half of the PFAS.

He said other countries are already moving ahead with regulations on PFAS, with the United States setting strict limits on drinking water and Europe planning to restrict or ban many of these chemicals.

"Malaysia still has time to act early. If we wait too long, cleaning up PFAS later will be very difficult and very expensive.

"The reason is, once contamina-

tion happens, cleaning it up requires complex and costly technology," he added.

Health expert Datuk Dr NKS Tharmaseelan warned that exposure to PFAS posed serious long-term health and environmental risks, with improper disposal allowing PFAS to seep into soil and waterways, accumulating in rivers, seafood and human body.

Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Datuk Seri Arthur Kurup said the Environment Department (DOE) would be directed to check on the matter.

"They will also check with the Chemistry Department first as samples will go to them," he said.

# Study: Only 14.7% of Malaysian seniors ageing healthily

**FINDINGS** from the *National Health and Morbidity Survey 2025* show that only 14.7% of senior citizens in Malaysia meet key criteria for healthy ageing, highlighting major gaps in the country's preparedness for an ageing population.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the survey, conducted among 7,528 respondents aged 60 and above, is the second national study focusing on elderly health following the first in 2018.

He said the criteria for healthy ageing include strong social support, no cognitive limitations or depression, independence in daily activities and either no chronic diseases or well-controlled conditions.

"These findings underline the urgent need to strengthen public health efforts and social support systems to ensure our elderly can age healthily and with dignity," he said at the reveal of the survey findings.

Dzulkefly noted while countries such as Japan and Sweden took

nearly a century to adapt to ageing populations, Malaysia is expected to become an ageing nation by 2036, when those aged 60 and above exceed 15% of the population. He added Malaysia's pace of ageing is among the fastest in the world.

The survey highlights key systemic challenges in Malaysia, including mobility limitations, social isolation and rising financial pressures on seniors and their caregivers.

Malaysia's elderly population now stands at 4.1 million, with 18.8% living alone, almost triple the 6.3% recorded in 2018. Dzulkefly said transportation constraints are a major barrier affecting access to healthcare.

He said mobility issues are not only logistical but also a critical factor shaping quality of life and safety. However, the survey also found that 61.3% of seniors living alone still report strong social support networks.

On financial pressures, Dzulkefly said one in three caregivers faces a

heavy burden involving physical, emotional and financial strain. He added this is compounded by the fact that only 40% of Malaysians have sufficient Employees Provident Fund savings for old age. He said this economic strain often forces families to prioritise basic needs over healthcare.

In terms of mental health, 9.8% of seniors are found to have dementia, slightly higher than 8.5% in 2018, while depression rates decline to 8% from 11.2%.

Physical health indicators show some improvement. Limitations in Activities of Daily Living drop to 10% from 17%, while Instrumental Activities of Daily Living limitations decrease to 27% from 33%.

However, lifestyle risks remain. The survey finds 30.6% of seniors are physically inactive, while 12.8% engage in high levels of sedentary behaviour. It also shows 45% experience sarcopenia, 60% are at risk of frailty and 11% are already frail.

He said the conclusion is clear:

Malaysians are living longer, but not necessarily healthier. He added the key challenge is not only disease, but gaps in a long-term care system that remains underdeveloped and fragmented.

To address these issues, Dzulkefly outlined four strategic shifts, including a move from treatment to prevention, stronger community-based care and reforms in long-term care financing. Among the proposals being considered is long-term care insurance to ease financial burdens on families, ensuring seniors can access quality care without hardship.

He also stressed the need to strengthen senior activity centres as integrated community hubs offering healthcare, rehabilitation, social support and digital health monitoring.

In addition, he highlighted the importance of developing a "silver economy" that recognises seniors not just as dependents, but as active contributors with experience and economic potential. — Bernama

# Child vaccine catch-up drive on track

**T**HE United Nations said a three-year effort to immunise children who missed routine vaccinations due to the Covid-19 crisis is on course to reach its 21 million target.

The pandemic, which hit in 2020, severely strained health systems and disrupted vaccination campaigns, resulting in a resurgence of infectious diseases such as measles and polio.

The UN's World Health Organisation and the UN children's agency Unicef, plus the vaccine alliance Gavi, said in a joint statement that the so-called Big Catch-Up campaign "is on track to meet its target of catching up 21 million children".

The vaccine drive concluded last month. While final data is still being compiled, by the end of December last year, the campaign had reached an estimated 18.3 million children aged 1 to 5 across 36 countries in Africa and Asia, with more than 100 million doses of life-saving vaccines.

Of those children reached, an estimated 12.3 million had never received a vaccine dose before, while 15 million had never previously received a mea-

sles vaccine.

Besides reaching those children, the agencies said the drive had also improved immunisation programmes, making them better equipped to identify older children who were not in the system, having missed earlier doses.

"By protecting children who missed out on vaccinations because of disruptions to health services caused by Covid-19, the Big Catch-Up has helped to undo one of the pandemic's major negative consequences," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

## ANTI-VACCINE CONTENT

But not all is rosy. Vaccines are facing a tide of misinformation and disinformation, the agencies said, while cuts in foreign aid spending were also taking their toll.

The statement said chronic gaps in routine immunisation were "plain to see", with measles outbreaks rising in every region with around 11 million cases in 2024.

The surge is compounded by "declining vaccine confidence in some previously high-coverage communities".



A three-year effort to immunise children who missed routine vaccinations due to the Covid-19 crisis is on course to reach its 21 million target. PICTURE CREDIT: DRAZENIGIC — FREEPIK

WHO vaccines director Kate O'Brien said while the person parents trusted most on vaccination remained the health worker they interact with, "what is really troubling and a very high concern to all of us is that there has been evermore a politicisation of vaccines and of health".

Gavi chief executive Sania Nishtar said: "We are up against a social

media engine which has an incentive to promote disinformation and I think that needs to be strategically tackled."

"Social media algorithms promote hate, disinformation and lies. Put a good piece of information out there and you will have no traction," she added.

Unicef global chief of immunisation Ephrem Lemango said social media algorithms "tend

to reward outrage over accuracy and there is so much anti-vaccine content that it has its own "economy behind it".

"So we do need better content that is disseminated through these platforms," he told a press conference.

The continued decline of foreign aid spending and sharp funding cuts to global health "have seriously affected delivery of immunisation services. This will likely reverse hard-earned progress", he added.



# Ubah tabiat harian, gaya hidup elak penyakit berjangkit jadi 'bom jangka'

**Apakah** yang sebenarnya sedang berlaku dalam gaya hidup masyarakat kita hari ini. Renungi pendedahan Menteri Kesihatan, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad betapa lebih setengah juta rakyat dewasa di Malaysia dilaporkan menghidap sekurang-kurangnya empat penyakit tidak berjangkit (NCD) utama secara serentak.

Penyakit ini sudah tentu diabetes, hipertensi, obesiti dan penyakit jantung. Menteri Kesihatan menegaskan ia kini menjadi ancaman utama, menggantikan penyakit berjangkit mengikut data Tinjauan Kebangsaan Kesihatan dan Morbiditi (NHMS).

Situasi ini bukan sekadar menyentuh isu kesihatan individu, tetapi menjadi 'bom jangka' kepada ekonomi negara. Laporan menunjukkan NCD mengakibatkan kerugian ekonomi sekitar RM64.2 bilion setahun, kos langsung penjagaan kesihatan mencecah RM12.4 bilion. Ini semua menyentuh duit cukai rakyat.

Kerugian ini jelas menunjukkan kesan NCD memberi tekanan besar kepada produktiviti negara dan kewangan awam. Apatah lagi Malaysia dilaporkan akan menjadi negara menua menjelang 2030, berbaki empat tahun sahaja lagi. Malaysia turut diunjurkan beralih kepada status negara tua dalam tempoh 2043-2048.

Hakikatnya, punca kepada masalah ini semakin ketara dalam kehidupan harian masyarakat. Kita perlu akui corak hidup moden kini banyak dipengaruhi dua perkara iaitu kesibukan kerja dan 'rehat pasif'. Maksudnya, pada waktu siang rakyat bekerja dalam tekanan masa dan tanggungjawab namun apabila pulang ke rumah, gaya hidup berubah menjadi tidak aktif.

Kita lebih sanggup melayari media sosial berjam-jam, menonton skrin tanpa henti termasuk ketika makan, kemudian baring sehingga tidur. Mungkin tidak semua begitu, tetapi cuba lihat realiti di setiap rumah hari ini.

Ketagihan gaya hidup digital kini menjadi tabiat baharu manusia. Masa lapang kini lebih banyak dihabiskan di sofa atau katil dengan telefon di tangan, mengabaikan senaman ringan sekali gus mendorong kemunculan NCD.

Keselesaan jangka pendek kini lebih diutamakan berbanding kesihatan jangka panjang, yang sebenarnya membawa kesan negatif kepada individu dan negara. Justeru, perlu ada nafas baharu bagi mendorong orang kita meninggalkan keselesaan jangka pendek ini.

Kita boleh belajar pengalaman luar negara. Banyak negara maju mula melaksanakan pendekatan bersasar bagi mengurangkan risiko rakyatnya terbelenggu dengan NCD. Selain meningkatkan kempen penjagaan kesihatan, ada negara melaksanakan dasar fiskal.

Orang kita sedar semua kempen itu, tetapi terus mengabaikan disiplin mencegah penyakit dari awal. Masyarakat perlu jujur menilai diri betapa kesihatan tidak akan terjaga jika masa lapang terus diisi dengan 'tergolek di atas sofa atau katil'.

Kesimpulannya, krisis NCD bukan sekadar isu perubatan, tetapi cerminan gaya hidup. Selagi tabiat harian tidak berubah terutama pemakanan, ketagih melepak melayari media sosial dan malas bersenam, selagi itulah penyakit ini akan terus meningkat dan tidak mustahil akan 'diwarisi' generasi akan datang.

BERNAMA

**PELAN STRATEGIK KESIHATAN PERGIGIAN KEBANGSAAN 2022-2030**

Kuala Selangor

# Sasar 50 peratus warga emas kekal 20 gigi asli

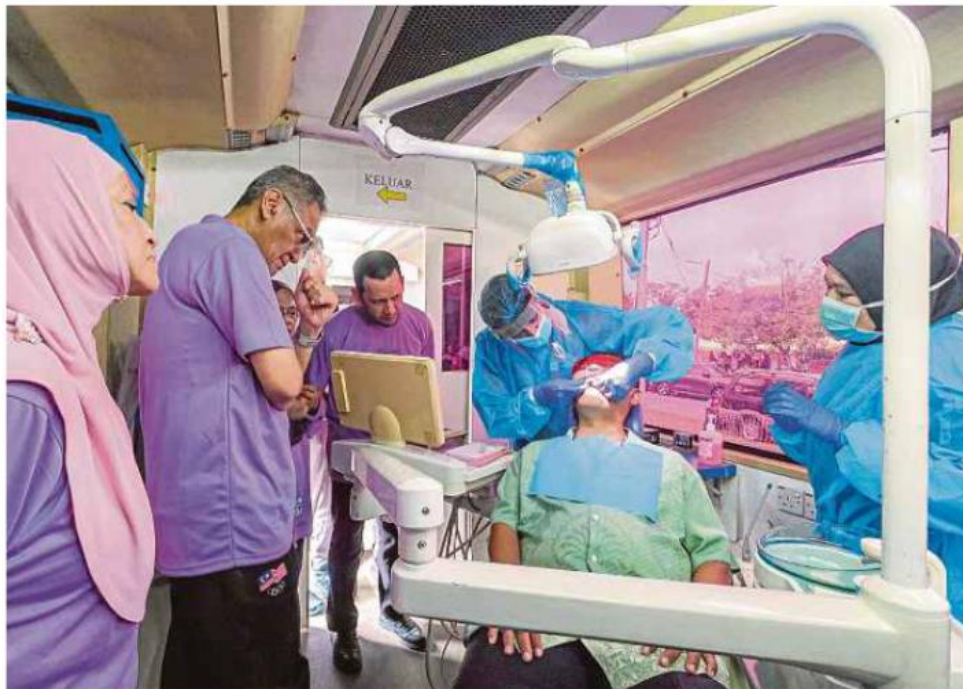
Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menyasarkan lebih 50 peratus warga emas untuk mengekalkan sekurang-kurangnya 20 batang gigi asli menjelang 2030, selari dengan Pelan Strategik Kesihatan Pergigian Kebangsaan 2022-2030.

Menterinya, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad berkata, berdasarkan Tinjauan Kebangsaan Kesihatan Mulut Orang Dewasa (NOHSA 2020), hanya 34.3 peratus warga emas mencapai tahap 20 batang gigi asli, manakala 13.9 peratus mengalami limitasi fungsi mulut yang menjejaskan kualiti hidup.

"Seperti yang saya sebutkan tadi, gigi adalah laluan masuk kepada tubuh badan, kita nak pastikan laluan masuk ini kekal berfungsi dan menjaga pelbagai, termasuk infeksi makanan dan sebagainya ini sangat mustahak.

"Saya sudah tekankan tanpa kesihatan oral, maka tiadalah kesihatan diri kerana itu peri penting kesihatan pergigian dalam mengekalkan keaktifan tubuh badan," katanya selepas Majlis Pelancaran Kempen 6020 dan Kembara Senyuman Peringkat Kebangsaan Tahun 2026, di sini, semalam.

Dzulkefly berkata, dalam memastikan sasaran ber-



DR Dzulkefly (dua dari kiri) melawat Klinik Gigi Bergerak pada Majlis Pelancaran Kempen 6020 dan Kembara Senyuman Peringkat Kebangsaan Tahun 2026.

kenaan dapat dicapai, pihaknya akan menggerakkan Kembara Senyuman ke seluruh negara yang antaranya menawarkan perkhidmatan pembuatan gigi palsu terus ke komuniti, pusat jagaan dan kawasan pedalaman.

Beliau berkata, pendekatan bagi memastikan tiada yang tercicir daripada mendapatkan akses kesihatan pergigian itu juga, akan menggunakan teknologi pendigitalan 3DDT untuk penghasilan gigi palsu yang pantas dan berkualiti tinggi.

Dzulkefly berkata, inisiatif berkenaan juga adalah antara langkah proaktif kerajaan dalam mendepani cabaran masyarakat menua, dengan statistik terkini menunjukkan penduduk berusia 65 tahun ke atas sudah mencecah 8.0 peratus pada tahun lalu.

"Program outreach atau pendekatan menjangkau kawasan luar bandar amat penting bagi memastikan tiada siapa yang tercicir, khususnya dalam kalangan kumpulan rentan atau berisiko tinggi," katanya.

**Kuala Lumpur:** Kumpulan individu usia 35 hingga 64 tahun merekodkan peratusan kematian pramatang akibat penyakit tidak berjangkit (NCD) tertinggi, sekali gus memberikan amaran jelas mengenai krisis kesihatan senyap yang kian membelenggu negara.

Pakar Perubatan Kesihatan Awam, Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar berkata, peningkatan kes berpunca faktor gaya hidup, ekonomi dan sosial.

"Golongan berpendapatan rendah (B40) adalah kumpulan paling teruk terjejas dengan Tinjauan Kesihatan dan Morbiditi Kebangsaan (NHMS) 2023 mendapati hampir separuh isi rumah B40 mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya satu NCD.

"Kajian tahun lalu turut menunjukkan kadar NCD dalam kalangan warga emas sangat tinggi dengan 73 peratus menghidap hipertensi dan 76 peratus menghidap kolesterol tinggi," katanya, semalam.

**KEMATIAN PRAMATANG AKIBAT PENYAKIT TIDAK BERJANGKIT**

## Hampir separuh isi rumah B40 ada satu NCD



DR Zainal

Beliau mengulas mengenai kenyataan Menteri Kesihatan bahawa negara berdepan krisis kesihatan awam yang membimbang-

kan apabila penyakit tidak berjangkit seperti diabetes, hipertensi, obesiti dan penyakit jantung terus menjadi ancaman utama kesihatan rakyat.

Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad dilaporkan berkata, NHMS mendapati lebih setengah juta orang dewasa di negara ini menghidap sekurang-kurangnya empat NCD utama secara serentak.

Beliau dipetik berkata, situasi itu bukan sekadar isu kesihatan peribadi, tetapi turut memberikan kesan besar kepada ekonomi negara yang dianggarkan menanggung kerugian RM64.2 bilion setiap tahun akibat NCD.