

Healthcare projects worth RM1.8bil planned for Melaka

MELAKA: Health infrastructure projects worth RM1.8bil are in the pipeline for Melaka under the 13th Malaysia Plan, says Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

The Health Minister said that among the planned infrastructure development is a specialist hospital to be built in Ayer Keroh, costing an estimated RM875mil.

“The hospital will have 400 beds, focusing on providing cardiology, cardiothoracic, neurosurgery and ambulatory care centre (ACC) services.

“In addition, we are expediting the construction of the RM697mil, 476-bed capacity women and children’s block at Hospital Melaka to resolve its capacity issues,” he said after a working visit to the hospital.

Dzulkefly said the ministry also plans to demolish the 64-year-old Jasin health clinic and replace it with the Jasin integrated health complex, costing RM126.99mil.

He said the ministry would also seek approval for preliminary work details for the construction of the Bukit Katil health clinic (Type 2), which is expected to cost RM50mil, Bernama reported.

“These efforts reflect the government’s commitment to ensuring the health ecosystem in



Upgrading health facilities: Dzulkefly (centre) during a working visit to Hospital Melaka. — Bernama

Melaka remains competitive,” he added.

The minister said a special allocation of RM6mil had been approved for repair and upgrading works, and for the purchase of medical and non-medical assets in

the six facilities he visited.

The six health facilities are the Jasin, Melaka and Alor Gajah hospitals, Durian Tunggal and Jasin health clinics, as well as the Bukit Katil rural clinic.

“I hope the allocations and the

long-term planning will provide comfort to patients and facilitate the work of health personnel,” he said.

During his working visit to Melaka, Dzulkefly also launched a mobile dental clinic in Jasin.

Retiree running for a golden cause

Lim raises awareness on childhood cancer while honouring late wife’s dream

By CHARLES RAMENDRAN
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KUALA LUMPUR: While most people his age may choose to enjoy retirement, long-distance runner Lim Shyang Guey runs for gold, but not the kind made from the precious metal.

He takes to the streets on foot for the gold ribbon, a symbol of childhood cancer awareness and carries a message of hope for young patients battling the deadly disease.

The 66-year-old Penangite said six years ago, he and his late wife Goh Joo Lee had planned to travel across the country after retirement, on foot, but unfortunately she was diagnosed with cancer and succumbed to the disease in 2024.

He decided to proceed with the journey in her memory and walk 2,200km across Peninsular Malaysia and use it as a mission to raise RM600,000 for the National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM) to fund treatment for children afflicted with cancer.

Carrying the photograph of Goh on a neck cord, Lim started his journey from Johor and arrived in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

“While grieving her death, I read many books on coping with



“I know my wife is with me in spirit during my runs as this is what we had wanted to do.”

Lim Shyang Guey

the loss of a spouse.

“One was about a man who walked the whole of England over a distance of 9,000km to bring cancer awareness, and it inspired me.

“I reached out to Laurence Carter, who wrote the book, *Grief to Love*, to learn more before planning my own journey.

“The initial plan was to walk, but it would be too time-consuming, so I decided to run.

“I know my wife is with me in

spirit during my runs as this is what we had wanted to do.

“I hope she is proud of me for undertaking this mission,” Lim said at NCSM 60th Anniversary Wellness Weekend here yesterday.

He said he ran between 25km and 40km daily and hopes to achieve his targeted distance in 90 days.

“I met many good people during my journey, and some have even joined me. Interestingly, Carter himself showed up in Malaysia six weeks ago.

“He ran with me in Johor for four days. He flew all the way from Washington in the United States,” he said.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Hanifah Hajar Taib said the Health Ministry is looking at ways to bring cancer treatment closer to patients’ homes to ease the burden on affected families.

Also present were Hospital Kuala Lumpur director Datuk Dr Hari Krishna K. Ragavan Nair, NCSM president Dr Saunthari Somasundaram and its managing director Prof Dr M. Muralitharan.

WATCH THE VIDEO
TheStarTV.com



From grief to gold: Lim (right) hitting the 2,200km mark on his walk around Peninsular Malaysia alongside Kuala Lumpur deputy police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Mohd Azani Omar (on Lim’s right) in Kuala Lumpur. — LOW BOON TAT / The Star

Preparing for an ageing nation

FOLLOWING Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri's call for public feedback on the Senior Citizens Bill ("Public feedback sought on Senior Citizens Bill", *Sunday Star*, June 7; online at bit.ly/star_feed), I would like to share my thoughts.

The Senior Citizens Bill presents an opportunity to shape how Malaysia supports ageing in the decades ahead.

Globally, many countries have shifted from viewing ageing as a social welfare issue to recognising it as a matter of rights, inclusion and participation.

Older persons are increasingly seen not merely as recipients of care but as active members of society entitled to dignity, independence and equal opportunities.

The proposed recommendations being discussed in Malaysia's Bill reflect this evolving approach. They include accessibility rights, independent living, community care, digital inclusion and stronger social protection. These are progressive aspirations and broadly consistent with international trends.

However, translating aspirations into practice will require careful planning and adaptation to Malaysia's realities.

One important concept gaining international recognition is "ageing in place" – enabling



Photo: Pixabay

older persons to continue living independently within their homes and communities for as long as possible.

Countries such as Japan and Singapore have invested substantially in community care, home support services and age-friendly neighbourhoods.

Malaysia has traditionally relied on family-based support. While this remains a cultural strength, smaller family sizes, urban migration and changing

demographics may place increasing pressure on caregivers.

Future policies may therefore need to consider:

- > Home-based care services;
- > Caregiver support programmes;
- > Respite care facilities;
- > Community activity centres; and
- > Incentives for family caregivers.

Without these supporting sys-

tems, ageing in place may remain difficult for many families.

Accessibility should not be confined to ramps and lifts. Public transport, housing design, digital services and healthcare facilities all influence how older persons participate in society.

Nevertheless, implementation requires balancing ambition with practicality.

Retrofitting older infrastructure nationwide could involve considerable costs. A phased approach prioritising new developments while progressively upgrading existing facilities may be more realistic.

Financial preparedness remains another major issue. Many Malaysians rely heavily on retirement savings and family support.

As life expectancy increases, retirement periods become longer. Countries facing ageing populations increasingly encourage active ageing through flexible employment, lifelong learning and reskilling programmes.

Malaysia may similarly need to consider:

- > Post-retirement employment opportunities;
- > Anti-age discrimination measures;
- > Flexible work arrangements; and
- > Opportunities for continued contribution by older persons.

Older people should not be viewed solely as dependants;

many remain active contributors to families, communities and the economy.

Healthcare demand will inevitably rise with population ageing. Beyond hospitals and clinics, attention may also be needed on:

- > Long-term care systems;
- > Nursing home standards;
- > Community healthcare services;
- > Home nursing support; and
- > Assistive technologies.

Long-term care remains an emerging area in Malaysia and may require stronger regulatory and support frameworks.

The Senior Citizens Bill should not merely address present needs. It should anticipate the realities Malaysia may face over the next 20 to 30 years.

The objective should be to create an environment where older persons remain independent, active and respected while ensuring families receive adequate support.

As the Bill moves towards completion in the coming months, broad public consultation involving senior citizens, civil society, healthcare professionals, employers and industry groups will be essential.

Ageing is not an issue affecting only older persons. It concerns every Malaysian because ageing is a future shared by all.

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Club boosts partnerships to promote healthcare in Negri

LIONS Clubs International District 308B3 Malaysia strengthened its commitment to community health development by engaging with key healthcare institutions in Negri Sembilan.

Led by its district governor Wong Sai Kee, the cabinet team paid a courtesy visit to the Negri Sembilan Health Department earlier this year with the aim of exploring potential areas of collaboration to enhance the reach and effectiveness of community healthcare services.

During the meeting, representatives from District 308B3 presented an overview of their ongoing community service initiatives, including blood donation drives, health screenings and medical assistance programmes.

Both sides discussed future strategic directions, focusing on resource integration and



Lions Clubs International District 308B3 Malaysia members paying a courtesy visit to the Negri Sembilan State Health Department. Seated from second left are Wong and Dr Nor Azizah. — Handout

cross-sector collaboration to further improve the quality of healthcare services.

Negri Sembilan Health Department deputy director (medical) Dr Nor Azizah Abdul

Samat commended Lions Clubs Malaysia as a key community partner for its outstanding contribution to blood donation initiatives.

She also expressed interest in

expanding collaboration in areas such as mental health and other healthcare-related fields to further enhance community well-being.

Following this, the delegation

proceeded to Sungai Ujong Club in Seremban to meet with International Medical University (IMU) Clinical Skills and Simulation Centre assistant director Malini Krishna.

Discussions focused on strengthening the partnership and exploring opportunities for joint community healthcare initiatives, particularly in training, medical education and public health awareness.

This series of engagements reflect District 308B3's continuous efforts to foster cross-sector collaboration, aligning with national healthcare priorities while enhancing the quality of its community service initiatives.

Guided by the spirit of "We Serve", Lions Clubs International will continue to work closely with government agencies and healthcare institutions to deliver comprehensive and sustainable health services to the community.

Seek help before breaking point

LAST week, a client sat in my counselling room. He walked in looking over his shoulder, asked to park his car three blocks away so no one known would see him and requested that I not use his real name anywhere. His hands were trembling, not from fear of me but from fear of being seen.

Ravi is a high-functioning professional in his early thirties. For the past year, frustration and stress have been eating away at his daily life. He couldn't sleep, was always snapping at his parents and is unable to land a steady job. He felt hollow. By the time he arrived, he wasn't just tired, he was broken. And yet, his primary concern wasn't his burnout; it was about being seen.

"What if someone recognises me?" he whispered.

That moment stopped me. Not because his story is unique, it isn't. But because of the extremes he went to just to ensure no one saw him walk through a counsellor's door. He wasn't ashamed of needing help. He was ashamed of being seen needing help.



That, dear readers, is the unspoken reality we refuse to name. We have a dangerous equation in our society, especially among men. We have been taught that: suffering = strength and asking for help = weakness.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Let's look at the data we cannot ignore.

The police reported that from 2020 to 2025, over 80% of reported suicide cases involved young working adult men. The same men who are told to "man up", "stop complaining" and "handle it" are the ones silently dying.

The National Health and Morbidity Survey tells us that depression among Malaysian adults has nearly doubled since 2019. Almost one million of us are living with this weight. Yet, we still whisper the word "counselling" or "therapy" like a curse.

Ravi told me, "I kept waiting until I was falling apart to come here. I thought if I just tried harder, I could think my way out of it."

Here's the truth every person reading this need to tattoo on their memory: You cannot think your way out of a brain chemistry imbalance or a traumatic

"Reaching out is not a weakness. In a hollow, disconnected world, walking into a counsellor's or a therapist's office is the bravest act of rebellion there is. Hiding your pain requires immense, exhausting energy. Facing it? That frees energy."

response. Mental health struggles are not a failure of attitude. Healing takes tools, time and often professional help, not just positive thoughts.

We wait because we believe the myths. We think, "I don't have 'real' problems, others have it worse." We fear, "If I seek help, people will think I'm unstable for my job." We tell ourselves, "Talking about it will make it more real."

But pain is not a competition. You do not need to be in a crisis to deserve support. Preventative mental health care is like servicing your car – you don't wait for the engine to explode before you check the oil.

Ravi waited until his engine was on fire. He waited until his frustration turned into isolation and his stress turned into physical illness. He is not alone. Two out of three employees report experiencing burnout. We are drowning in a perfect storm of digital isolation and generational pressure, surrounded by thousands of online "friends" but with no one to call when you need to talk to someone.

Here is what we need to understand: When we say, "It is okay not to be okay", we are not giving you permission to wallow; we are giving ourselves permission to stop running.

It is okay to be tired. It is okay to be overwhelmed by a workload that never gets lighter. But more importantly, it is okay to ask for help.

Reaching out is not a weakness. In a hollow, disconnected world, walking into a counsellor's or a therapist's office is the bravest act of rebellion there is. Hiding your pain requires immense, exhausting energy. Facing it? That frees energy.

To the men reading this: Vulnerability is not the enemy of strength. It is the source of courage. To everyone else: Stop waiting until you are broken. You don't need a diagnosis to deserve a safe space; you just need to be human.

Ravi is still in counselling. He still parks a little further away sometimes but he is sleeping better. He is laughing again. And last week, he told me, "I wish I had come a year ago."

Don't wait until your engine explodes.

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AI vaccine shows modest effect

A VACCINE targeting a broad range of viruses, designed using artificial intelligence, had a "modest" effect on the immune system in a small early trial, according to a new study.

The trial marks the first time a vaccine whose active ingredient was fully designed by AI has been tested on humans, researchers at the University of Cambridge said.

The experimental jab is intended to be a "universal vaccine" that would protect people against a range of viruses that have previously sparked deadly outbreaks, including SARS, MERS and Covid-19.

Researchers said this type of vaccine could one day help fend off future pandemics.

"We've converted vaccine development from being reactive to being future-proof," Cambridge researcher and study co-author Jonathan Heeney said.

Currently, vaccines for viruses such as the flu and Covid-19 have to be updated to target the latest strains.

However, the new vaccine aims to produce an immune response that could protect against many pathogens, including some circulating in wild animals that may spill over into humans in the future.

"It means we can escape the constant cycle of chasing virus variants circulating in humans and updating vaccines to catch up, like a dog chasing its tail," Heeney said.

To design the vaccine's active component, called the antigen, the researchers used a machine learning algorithm trained on genetic

data for Sarbeco coronaviruses collected worldwide.

Nearly 40 people participated in the trial between late 2021 and 2023. In the study, the researchers acknowledged that the lingering Covid-19 pandemic complicated the results.

It was a phase 1 trial, which tests safety and tolerability, and is not intended to fully measure how effective it is.

No serious side effects were recorded.

However, the vaccine only had a "modest" impact on the participants' immune systems, according to the study published in the *Journal of Infection*.

Data collected during the trial does "not support a robust vaccine-induced increase in antibody responses beyond pre-existing levels", it added.

A phase 2 trial involving more people will next find out more about how protective the vaccine could be.



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Addressing mental health issues

More than 210,000 cases addressed via dedicated support centre since 2021, says minister



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KUCHING: A total of 210,294 mental health cases nationwide have been successfully addressed through the One-Stop Social Support Centre (OSSSC) service from October 2021 to May this year.

Describing the achievement as encouraging, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri said the centre had become increasingly proactive in addressing mental health issues across the country.

"Alongside the OSSSC, we also implement the 'Minda Sejahtera programme', through which we conduct outreach activities to raise public awareness of available psychosocial support services and encourage those facing challenges to seek help," the Santubong MP told reporters when met at the National Welfare Foundation (YKN)'s 'PSSS Friends Programme: Caring Students and Green Trail' at Paradise Beach, Jalan Trombol, near here yesterday.

Nancy added that her ministry was working closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in addressing mental health issues nationwide.

"We have our own experts, but we also recognise the expertise available within the MoH. Close coordination between both ministries allows us to effectively combine our resources and



Nancy (seated, third left) joins others in a ketupat-weaving session, carried out as one of the activities in the programme. — Photo by Roystein Emmor

expertise in addressing mental health concerns," she said.

Nancy also spoke about the recent case involving a 22-year-old woman, who allegedly threw her newborn baby girl off from

the 10th floor of a flat in Johor Bahru last month.

The woman pleaded guilty at the Sessions Court there to a charge under Section 304(a) of the Penal Code, which carries a

maximum prison sentence of 30 years and a fine upon conviction.

Commenting on this, Nancy said her ministry was still awaiting a comprehensive report from medical and health

authorities to determine the actual circumstances faced by the woman.

"At times, mothers may experience post-natal depression or other psychological challenges

We have our own experts, but we also recognise the expertise available within the MoH. Close coordination between both ministries allows us to effectively combine our resources and expertise in addressing mental health concerns.

Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri

after giving birth, and these factors need to be taken into consideration.

"However, the case is still very recent and we are awaiting further information before drawing any conclusion."

Nevertheless, Nancy said her ministry, through the Welfare Department (JKM), is currently identifying a suitable and qualified person to care for the other twin baby in the case.

"Priority is usually given to family members (but) if there is no suitable family member, we will consider other qualified individuals."

"The JKM has its own procedures and assessment process to identify the most suitable person to care for the child," said the minister.

Kuantan: Seorang lelaki yang ditemukan maut di hadapan lobi utama Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan (HTAA) di sini, kelmarin disahkan bukan pesakit yang sedang menerima rawatan di hospital berkenaan mahupun kakitangannya.

Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Pahang (JKNP) dalam kenyataan memaklumkan lelaki dewasa itu ditemukan dalam keadaan tidak sedarkan diri kira-kira pukul 10 pagi.

Menurut kenyataan itu, pasukan perubatan dari Jabatan Kecemasan dan Trauma HTAA bergegas ke lokasi bagi menjalankan pemeriksaan sebelum mengesahkan lelaki berkenaan meninggal dunia.

Katanya pihak Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM) bersama pegawai penyiasat turut berada di lokasi bagi menjalankan siasatan lan-



SEORANG lelaki ditemui tidak sedarkan diri di depan lobi HTAA.

Lelaki maut di lobi HTAA bukan pesakit

jut berhubung kejadian itu.

“Selepas pemeriksaan awal dan proses dokumentasi selesai, mayat dihantar ke Jabatan Forensik HTAA untuk tindakan lanjut,” menurut kenyataan itu.

JKNP turut menasihatkan orang ramai supaya

tidak membuat sebarang spekulasi yang boleh menjejaskan proses siasatan.

“JKNP turut merakamkan ucapan takziah kepada keluarga dan waris si mati serta memohon agar privasi mereka dihormati sepanjang tempoh siasatan dijalankan,” menurut kenyataan itu.