

By LOW CO SIN

cosin.low@thestar.com.my

Photos: LIM BENG TATT/The Star

SINCE 2022, a total of 597 smoking offence notices have been issued in the George Town Unesco World Heritage Site as authorities sustain efforts to keep the area smoke-free.

Penang youth, sports and health committee chairman Daniel Gooi Zi Sen said the enforcement reflected the state government's continued commitment to preserving the heritage zone as a smoke-free area.

"The Unesco World Heritage Site in George Town has been gazetted a smoke-free zone since 2015, and efforts are ongoing to ensure compliance under the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 (Act 852)," he said.

Gooi, at a press conference announcing the Penang Smoke-Free Awareness Promotional Materials and Survey Programme at Lebuh Armenian, Gooi said 106 offence notices were issued last year, while 127 had been recorded so far this year.

Komtar assemblyman Teh Lai Heng and Pengkalan Kota assemblyman Wong Yuee Harn were also present.

Gooi noted that in some years, including last year, the number of offence notices remained relatively consistent despite increased enforcement activities.

"However, this year we are seeing an increase in the number of notices issued.

"If anyone is found to be smoking in a prohibited area, he or she will be issued an RM250 compound notice on the spot."

Gooi expressed hope that the placement of additional promo-

# Smoking offences on the rise in Penang

## Heritage enclave gazetted as smoke-free since 2015, smokers risk RM250 compounds



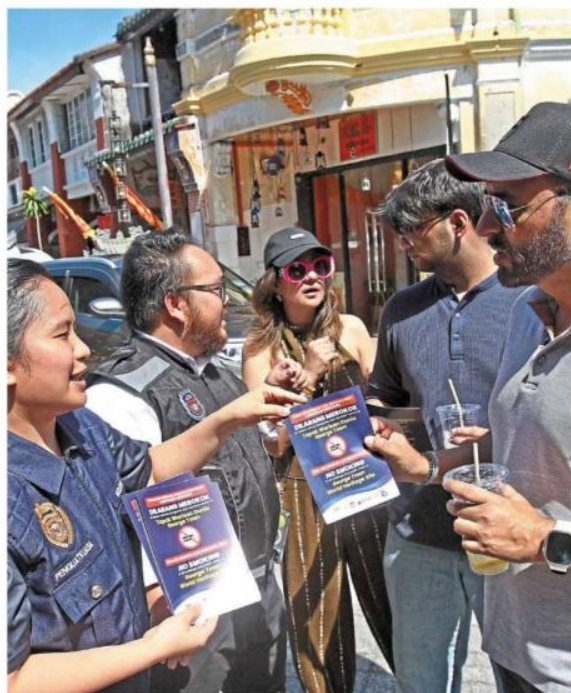
(From left) Gooi is joined by Teh and Wong in launching the Penang Smoke-Free Programme along Lebuh Armenian, in George Town.

tional materials, as part of ongoing public awareness efforts, would serve as a reminder to both residents and tourists that they were entering a smoke-free zone.

Meanwhile, he said several other locations in Penang have

also been gazetted as smoke-free zones under Act 852.

These include Penang City Park, Penang Botanic Gardens, Air Itam Dam, Mengkuang Dam, Taman Bandar Ampang Jajar and the Teluk Bahang Dam area.



MBPP enforcement officers handing out flyers on Penang's smoke-free policy.

# NGO launches third free clinic in Nilai

A THIRD Klinik Amal Percuma has been opened in Nilai, Negri Sembilan, marking the strategic expansion of free, community-based primary healthcare for economically disadvantaged households.

A collaboration between Maaedicare Charitable Foundation (YAM) and Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS), the Nilai clinic is a continuation of Maaedicare's approach to care anchored in early detection, clinical rigour and continuity of treatment, according to the foundation's press statement.

Since 2023, the model has already reached over 8,000 patients through its clinics in Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh, Perak, many of whom presented with previously undiagnosed or poorly controlled chronic conditions.

YAM chief executive officer Anne Rajasaikaran said the Nilai community reflected the very populations the foundation was established to serve.

"Many of the patients who visit our clinics are living with silent conditions – hypertension, early diabetes – without know-

ing it," she said at the launch.

"By the time they reach tertiary care, the disease has often progressed significantly.

"Our free clinics allow us to intervene earlier, detecting risk, initiating treatment and reducing the financial toxicity that too often causes families experiencing hardship to delay care until it is too late.

"In communities such as Nilai, those most at risk are often the least likely to seek care – not because of reluctance, but because each consultation carries a cost they cannot consistently absorb.

"Our clinics remove that barrier. What it provides is not just access, but dignity, continuity and the confidence for individuals to take control of their health.

"Reaching 8,176 patients through our first two clinics has validated this model.

"Nilai is the natural next step in scaling that impact."

YAM chairman Tunku Datuk Yaacob Khyra said: "Access to healthcare alone is not enough – what matters is when and how care is delivered.



Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz (third from right) at the launch of Klinik Amal Percuma in Nilai, alongside (from left) Maaedicare Board of Trustees members Megat Mizan Nicholas Denney and Datuk Dr Kili Ghandhi Raj Somasundram, Tunku Yaacob, Anne and Danial Iskandar.

"By placing primary care directly within communities like Nilai, we are shifting the paradigm from reactive treatment to proactive health management.

"This is how we reduce the long-term national burden of chronic disease – by acting earlier, closer to the patient and with greater continuity," he said.

Maaedicare as a non-governmental organisation was

uniquely positioned to complement the public healthcare system, he added.

"Ultimately, this is about building a healthcare ecosystem that is not only accessible but resilient."

Open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 1pm on a walk-in basis, services at the free clinic include point-of-care screenings, chronic disease management

and lifestyle counselling.

Additional Klinik Amal Percuma locations are currently in development.

The launch was attended by Tunku Temenggong Kedah Tan Sri Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz Almarhum Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, who is also MRCS national chairman, and MRCS secretary-general Datuk Danial Iskandar Abdul Rahman.

COMMENT by Dr Shabina Rehman

# Caught in a trap of helplessness

**D**EPRESSION strikes millions but in its darkest form, it drives fathers to destroy what they love most – their own families.

Friends and family can identify these cognitive shifts early, particularly “learned helplessness”, the psychological state arising from repeated uncontrollable stressors, thereby averting tragedies.

“Learned helplessness”, a term coined by psychologist Martin Seligman in the late 1960s, happens when someone faces repeated uncontrollable problems like job loss, mounting debt or family pressures they can’t fix.

Consider a father passed over for promotion year after year. After a while, he stops taking effort, stops asking for raises even when a new boss arrives who might listen. Or a family member, whose opinions get ignored at every gathering, eventually stops speaking up entirely.

The brain learns “nothing works”, killing motivation and trapping people in passivity and despair, even when escape appears. This breeds chronic sadness, poor focus and giving up on goals.

It explains why some endure abuse, poverty or dead-end jobs without fighting back. For most, withdrawal follows. But in severe cases, it darkens further, making death the only perceived escape for all.

Mental health cases have nearly doubled among Malaysian adults since 2019, reaching 29.2%, according to the National Health and Morbidity (NHMS) Survey data.

Men raised to endure silently as providers hide pain until financial stress overwhelms them. These same pressures build early in university students, who carry them forward as tomorrow’s family providers.

NHMS 2023 data reveals that one million Malaysians aged 16 and above are living with

depression while the Malaysian Youth Mental Health Index 2023 found that six in 10 youths aged 15 to 30 are struggling with mild-to-severe depressive symptoms and three in 10 with moderate-to-severe anxiety.

On another note, Malaysia’s “*tahan saja*” culture continues to affect male mental health, discouraging many men from seeking help even when clear warning signs are present.

Calls to Talian Heal 15555 doubled to 90,981 in 2025. Yet men aged 18 to 35 – often carrying significant financial and family responsibilities – remain among the least likely to reach out for support. Early intervention can significantly reduce suicide risk, but cultural expectations and stigma often delay help-seeking until a crisis emerges.

These combined pressures and cultural barriers transform learned helplessness into three specific cognitive distortions.

➡ **Disaster feels certain:** Endless negative thoughts lock the mind, unlike everyday stress that comes and goes. Normal worry (“I hope we pay the bills this month”) turns into fact (“We will lose the house”).

➡ **Love becomes deadly:** They believe death “saves” their family from suffering – “better off without my failure”. Studies show 68% of these fathers never showed violence before.

➡ **No time left:** They lose all sense of future beyond days or weeks, compressing months of normal planning into a frantic four to six-week rush. These are not gradual worries. The entire way of thinking flips suddenly, like a switch. These patterns cluster together, setting them apart from routine strain.

## From twisted thoughts to dangerous actions

These mental flips don’t stay inside the head; they quickly show up as behaviours anyone can notice.

➡ Persistent talk about financial ruin can

evolve into catastrophic thinking, drawing the entire family into gloom. The “deadly love” distortion appears when seemingly casual remarks become alarming, such as: “The kids would be better off without me.”

A distorted sense of time may manifest as obsessive monitoring of finances or quietly putting affairs in order. Sleeplessness is often associated with depression, but when coupled with expressions of hopelessness centred on loved ones, it can signal a worsening crisis.

Everyday frustrations tend to pass. However, sudden anger or intense preoccupation with “protecting” family members may reflect a troubling shift in thinking and a breakdown in healthy emotional connections.

When someone starts staying home far more than usual, skipping work, avoiding friends or withdrawing from daily life, it may be a warning sign of deeper emotional distress, particularly in men facing financial and family pressures.

This becomes more concerning if financial documents such as bank statements or bills suddenly go missing or are handled differently than before. These subtle changes can reflect growing shame, secrecy or distorted thinking associated with depression and may indicate a need for gentle support before the situation escalates. These behaviours cluster fast, unlike routine stress that scatters. They indicate preparation, not mere retreat.

## Effective questions to ask

Friends and family can interrupt a downward spiral with simple, caring conversations.

Thoughtful questions can gently probe for hidden dangers without sounding confrontational. The responses may provide insight into a person’s outlook, sense of hope or signal urgent risk.

➡ “What are your plans for the next few weeks or months?”

People experiencing stress or temporary setbacks will often describe upcoming responsibilities, goals or events. Responses that reflect an inability to envision the future, persistent hopelessness or a complete absence of plans may warrant closer attention.

➡ “What keeps you going when things feel difficult?”

Answers that identify meaningful relationships, responsibilities or sources of purpose can indicate protective factors. Expressions of overwhelming guilt, worthlessness or beliefs that others would be better off without them may signal increased risk.

➡ “Would you be willing to contact Talian HEAL together right now?”

A willingness to seek support is generally a positive sign. Strong resistance, refusal to engage with available help or statements suggesting there is no point in seeking assistance may indicate the need for more urgent intervention.

## Act before it is too late

Friends and family are often the first to notice subtle changes in a person’s behaviour. Remarks that suggest hopelessness, excessive guilt or that loved ones would be better off without them may reflect more than momentary frustration and deserve attention.

Psychological research shows that people in crisis often exhibit recognisable warning signs before a tragedy occurs.

A single conversation can make a meaningful difference. If you are concerned about someone, do not ignore the warning signs – reach out, ask, listen and help connect them with support.

*Dr Shabina Rehman is a senior lecturer at Management and Science University, Malaysia. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com*

# 'MoHE committed to helping students affected by PharmD non-recognition'

**KOTA SAMARAHAN:** The Higher Education Ministry (MoHE) has pledged to help four Malaysian students affected by a recognition issue in the clinical pharmacy (PharmD) programme at Alexandria University in Egypt.

Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir said the ministry is working with the relevant authorities to resolve the matter, which stemmed from a change in the programme's name by the university.

"The programme had previously been offered as a pharmacy degree without any issues, but the university later renamed it to clinical pharmacy (PharmD), resulting in confusion over its recognition by the Pharmacy Board Malaysia (PBM).

"The university should have informed the Malaysian government, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), or the PBM. As we know, pharmacy has its own professional board," he told reporters after launching 'mySISWA@Job

on Campus' programme at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak on Tuesday.

He noted that professional recognition of pharmacy programmes falls under PBM, which operates under the Ministry of Health.

"The ministry itself cannot be involved in the recognition process because there is a professional board responsible for accrediting pharmacy programmes," he said.

Despite the issue affecting only four students, Zambry said MoHE sympathised with them and is committed to assisting them.

He added that he had informed Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad about the matter and that both ministries would facilitate efforts to find a solution.

Zambry also stressed that the university's recognition by MQA was not in question, noting that the programme had operated smoothly before the name change.

# KKM garis 10 pelan mitigasi perbelanjaan

## Pekeliling ditetapkan langkah bagi tangani kesan konflik di Asia Barat

Oleh Fahmy A Rosli  
fahmy.azril@bh.com.my

**Kuala Lumpur:** Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menggariskan 10 pelan mitigasi perbelanjaan yang akan dilaksanakan bagi menangani kesan konflik di Asia Barat.

Pekeliling bertarikh 15 Mei lalu yang dilihat *BH*, ditandatangani oleh Ketua Setiausaha KKM, Datuk Seri Hasnol Zam Azam Ahmad.

Dalam pekeling itu, KKM antaranya menetapkan kawalan tuntutan Elau Lebih Masa (ELM) yang hanya dibenarkan bagi pelaksanaan tugas kritikal dan tidak dapat ditangguhkan,

dengan kelulusan ketua jabatan masing-masing selaras dasar semasa pelaksanaan ELM.

KKM turut melaksanakan ujian makmal secara berhemah berdasarkan keperluan klinikal dan justifikasi perubahan yang munasabah, bagi membantu mengurangkan pembaziran, mengoptimum kos operasi hospital serta memastikan sumber sedia ada dapat dimanfaatkan secara lebih berkesan tanpa menjejaskan kualiti rawatan serta keselamatan pesakit.

Selain itu, KKM akan mengoptimum penggunaan ubat dengan menggalakkan penggunaan ubat generik bagi memastikan akses rakyat kepada ubat berkualiti pada harga berpatutan, tanpa menjejaskan aspek keselamatan dan keberkesanan.

Menerusi langkah sama, KKM mahu memperkukuh kawalan penggunaan ubat dengan memastikan preskripsi dan pembekalan ubat dibuat berdasarkan keperluan klinikal yang munasabah dan mematuhi garis panduan serta formulari di-

tetapkan Kementerian itu.

"Memantau penggunaan ubat secara berterusan bagi mengelakkan pembaziran, mengurangkan risiko lebih stok dan pelupusan ubat, serta memastikan peruntukan kewangan dapat dimanfaatkan lebih cekap tanpa menjejaskan kualiti rawatan dan keselamatan pesakit," kata pekeling itu.

**Tangguh perjawatan baharu**  
Dalam pekeling sama, KKM turut menagguhkan pewujudan perjawatan dan kuota baharu di bawah 'Malaysia Short-Term Employment Programme' atau MySTEP.

Pewujudan jawatan baharu ditangguhkan kecuali melalui kaedah tukar ganti dan pindah butiran serta tiada implikasi kewangan tambah.

Bagi pertambahan kuota baharu di bawah program MySTEP, ia akan dimaklumkan kelak tertakluk keperluan perkhidmatan dan kelulusan pihak berkuasa berkaitan.

Bagi langkah penjimatan lain, KKM akan memastikan

perjalanan bertugas rasmi dalam negeri dihadkan kepada perjalanan yang benar-benar perlu sahaja, dengan bilangan pegawai minimum, termasuk membabitkan kursus dan latihan.

KKM antara lain mengehadkan lawatan atau kunjungan ke luar negara oleh pegawai kepada mesyuarat berjadual sahaja, selepas mengambil kira mesyuarat itu memerlukan kehadiran fizikal dan tidak dapat dihadiri secara dalam talian.

"Dalam hal ini, bilangan delegasi hendaklah dihadkan kepada keperluan minimum yang benar-benar diperlukan berdasarkan kesesuaian tugas," kata dokumen itu.

Dalam dokumen itu juga, KKM menggariskan pelan untuk melaksanakan penjimatan utiliti seperti telekomunikasi elektrik dan air, termasuk membabitkan barang pakai habis antaranya alat tulis, kertas dan catridge.

Untuk itu, KKM akan beralih dengan melaksanakan pendigitalan dokumen mesyuarat

secara menyeluruh termasuk penggunaan dokumen elektronik bagi tujuan penyediaan kertas mesyuarat, minit mesyuarat, edaran dokumen dan penyimpanan rekod rasmi.

"Pada masa sama, KKM mahu melaksanakan penjimatan tenaga selaras dengan Arahan Pelaksanaan Langkah Kecekapan Tenaga Tanpa Kos di Premis Kerajaan, dengan menetapkan suhu pendingin hawa kepada sekurang-kurangnya 24 darjah Celsius di semua ruang pejabat dan bilik mesyuarat," kata pekeling itu.

Di bawah arahan penjimatan tenaga itu, lampu dan peralatan elektrik perlu ditutup apabila digunakan, terutama ketika waktu rehat tengah hari dan selepas waktu pejabat.

Susulan arahan penjimatan oleh Kementerian Kewangan, KKM membatalkan pengajuran rumah terbuka sempena sambutan perayaan serta menagguhkan pengajuran acaraan, majlis, keraian rasmi kerajaan, mesyuarat, persidangan, seminar mahupun bengkel.



# 'Ambil jururawat asing hanya di fasiliti kesihatan swasta'

**Kuala Lumpur:** Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menegaskan pengambilan jururawat asing pada masa ini hanya dilaksanakan di fasiliti kesihatan swasta, tertakluk peraturan ketat yang sedang berkuat kuasa.

KKM dalam kenyataan kepada *BH* memaklumkan ketika ini tiada sebarang dasar khusus yang membenarkan pengambilan jururawat warga asing untuk berkhidmat di fasiliti kesihatan awam di bawah Kementerian berkenaan.

"KKM mengambil maklum laporan media berhubung cadangan memperluaskan pengambilan tenaga kesihatan asing, khususnya jururawat bagi memenuhi keperluan perkhidmatan kesihatan negara.

"KKM mengakui terdapat cabaran kekurangan tenaga kerja



kesihatan, terutama dalam kalangan jururawat dan beberapa bidang kepakaran tertentu," katanya.

Maklum balas KKM itu hadir susulan laporan eksklusif *BH* semalam mengenai kesediaan Indonesia membekalkan 15,000 jururawat ke Malaysia bagi membantu menangani krisis kekurangan tenaga kerja dalam

sektor terbabit.

Menurut KKM pelbagai langkah sedang diteliti bagi memastikan penyampaian perkhidmatan kesihatan kepada rakyat terus terpelihara.

"KKM sedang menilai keperluan tenaga kerja kesihatan secara menyeluruh, termasuk kesesuaian penggunaan jururawat asing.

"Keutamaan KKM kekal kepada usaha memperkukuh tenaga kerja kesihatan tempatan melalui peningkatan kapasiti latihan, pengoptimuman penempatan, penggalakan bakat serta penambahbaikan persekitaran kerja bagi memastikan sistem kesihatan negara kekal mampan dan berdaya tahan," katanya.

Katanya, KKM juga sedang meneliti penambahbaikan proses berkaitan pengamal peru-



Ketika ini tiada dasar khusus membenarkan pengambilan jururawat asing untuk berkhidmat di fasiliti kesihatan awam.

(Foto hiasan)

batan asing bersama agensi berkaitan, iaitu mengambil kira aspek perundangan, kawal selia, kompetensi dan pembangunan tenaga kerja tempatan.

Menerusi laporan eksklusif *BH*, Duta Besar Indonesia ke Malaysia, Raden Datuk Mo-

hammad Iman Hascarya Kusumo, mendedahkan republik itu kini melahirkan kira-kira 65,000 jururawat baharu setiap tahun, sekali gus mempunyai bekalan tenaga kerja yang sangat mencukupi untuk dihan-

**Bayi pramatang  
pulang ke  
pangkuan keluarga  
selepas jalani dua  
pembedahan kritikal**

Oleh NURUL HIDAYAH  
HAMID

**SHAH ALAM** - Hospital Sultanah Nur Zahirah (HSNZ) mencipta satu lagi pencapaian membanggakan apabila berjaya merawat dan melakukan dua pembedahan terhadap seorang bayi pramatang seberat 500 gram, sekaligus menjadi bayi paling kecil pernah di-kendalikan di hospital berkenaan.

Menerusi perkongsian HSNZ, bayi tersebut mengalami Necrotising Enterocolitis (NEC) yang menyebabkan kebocoran usus ketika berusia lima hari dan memerlukan pembedahan major laparotomi kecemasan.

"Ketika itu, bayi ini baru berusia lima hari dan hanya seberat 500 gram. Tiga bulan kemudian, bayi ini sekali lagi menjalani pembedahan penutupan stoma dan kedua-

dua prosedur berjaya dilaksanakan dengan selamat.

"Selama hampir empat bulan di Unit Rawatan Rapi Neonatal (NICU), bayi kecil ini berjuang setiap hari untuk terus hidup dan membesar.

"Dengan usaha tanpa mengenal penat daripada pasukan kepakaran multidisiplin, jururawat NICU serta seluruh pasukan kesihatan, akhirnya bayi ini cukup kuat untuk pulang ke pangkuan keluarga," menurut hantaran tersebut.

HSNZ berkata, kejayaan itu menjadi bukti keajaiban dalam dunia perubatan lahir daripada gabungan ilmu, kepakaran, doa, harapan dan kegigihan semua pihak.

"Bagi pejuang kecil ini, setiap gram membawa makna, setiap hari

# HSNZ rawat, bedah bayi seberat 500 gram



HSNZ mencipta sejarah membanggakan apabila berjaya merawat dan melakukan dua pembedahan terhadap bayi pramatang seberat 500 gram, baru-baru ini.

adalah kemenangan dan setiap langkah merupakan satu keajaiban.

"Daripada 500 gram kepada kepulungan dinanti-nantikan. Sebuah kisah keberanian, kasih

sayang dan harapan yang tidak pernah padam," ujarnya.

Sementara itu, kisah bayi berkenaan turut mendapat perhatian Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia

(KKM) yang disifatkan sebagai satu perjuangan besar seorang insan kecil yang berjaya mengharungi detik-detik kritikal sepanjang hampir empat bulan menerima rawatan di NICU.

"Alhamdulillah, satu pencapaian bersejarah buat HSNZ. Berkat kepakaran, kerjasama dan doa, seorang pejuang kecil seberat 500 gram berjaya mengharungi detik-detik kritikal hampir empat bulan di NICU.

"Keajaiban itu kini menjadi realiti apabila si kecil berjaya pulang dengan selamat ke pangkuan keluarga," katanya.

KKM turut mengucapkan tahniah kepada seluruh pasukan perubatan HSNZ yang bertungkus-lumus memastikan nyawa berharga itu terus diselamatkan.