

# More accessible medicine delivery

## Patients to receive prescriptions by post at no cost under expanded scheme

By **ARFA YUNUS**

arfayunus@thestar.com.my

**PUTRAJAYA:** The government is looking to expand its medicine delivery programme nationwide, with patients no longer required to bear postal delivery costs, says Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

He said the Communications Ministry and Health Ministry are finalising arrangements to strengthen the "Ubat Melalui Pos" (UMP) programme, which delivers medicines to eligible patients under the Health Ministry care.

"We have seen a model that can be supported and, in the not-too-distant future, I believe we can manage the delivery of medicines to all Malaysians who require it under KKM," he said at the signing ceremony of a memorandum

of understanding between the Health Ministry and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) for the Persada initiative yesterday.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad was also present.

Fahmi said he had been informed that about 80,000 patients use the service each month.

The programme will be fully funded by MCMC and the Health Ministry, meaning patients will no longer have to pay for medicine deliveries.

"The service will be managed and borne entirely by MCMC and KKM, so patients will no longer need to pay.

"We will discuss and align several matters to make the delivery process easier."

According to Fahmi, the initiative will be financed through Federal Government allocations, with annual costs estimated at RM5.69mil.

He said the government hopes to begin implementation as early as July across all states.

"We hope to begin in every state so that the cost does not have to be borne by any party, especially the patients. It will be fully covered by the government."

Fahmi said the programme serves patients across various disease categories and income groups, with eligibility determined solely by the Health Ministry.

"We are not involved in selecting the patients. That is completely under the Health Ministry.

"However, since the service is provided through Pos Malaysia,

which is a licensee under MCMC, we will manage the programme," he said.

Meanwhile, Fahmi said the government plans to expand the role of National Information Dissemination Centres (Nadi) nationwide, including the introduction of telemedicine services and AI-powered health screening tools to improve healthcare access in underserved areas.

He said residents would be able to undergo preliminary health assessments closer to home, adding that several parties working with the MCMC had introduced AI-enabled devices capable of analysing retinal scans and providing basic assessments of an individual's overall health.

On the National Digital Health Ecosystem and Connectivity Catalyst (Persada) initiative,

Dzulkefly said the programme had recorded more than 4.21 million registered users and over 22.41 million digital transactions as of April 2026, averaging 75,000 transactions daily.

Later, during a press conference, Dzulkefly said outstanding treatment bills owed by foreign patients at government healthcare facilities had continued to decline over the past three years.

The issue has drawn public attention over the cost of treating foreign nationals, including Rohingya refugees.

Dzulkefly said outstanding foreign patient treatment bills stood at RM30.57mil in 2025, down from RM33.46mil in 2024 and RM34.97mil in 2023, reflecting a downward trend despite claims that the government incurs losses of RM30mil annually.

## Patients welcome free delivery service

By **RAHIMY RAHIM**

rahimy@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** Free medicine delivery services could reduce long queues and repeated hospital visits while easing access to prescriptions for senior citizens and patients with mobility challenges, according to healthcare users.

Retiree P. Nirmala, 70, from Penang, welcomed the government's proposal to provide free medicine delivery, saying it would particularly benefit elderly patients and those facing difficulties travelling to hospitals for routine prescription refills.

Nirmala, who resides in Bukit Mertajam, currently receives her medication from Hospital Penang in George Town via a delivery service.

She said the existing fee was affordable for intra-state deliveries, but free access would significantly ease the burden on lower-income patients.

"It is a good initiative for senior citizens like us, especially when commuting to the hospital is not always easy if we are only going there to collect medicines," she said yesterday.

Earlier, the government said it was looking to expand its medicine delivery programme nationwide, with patients no longer required to bear postal delivery costs, according to Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

Nirmala added that hospital visits often require assistance from family members, who must take time off work.

"It is not very convenient to travel to the hospital just to collect medicines. My children would have to take leave from work to accompany me.

"When the medicines are delivered to our home, it is much easier and more convenient," she said.

While she does not object to the current fee, Nirmala said waiving



**Welcome news:** Free medicine delivery services could reduce long queues and repeated hospital visits for many.

it would make a meaningful difference for many patients.

"For some people, even RM5 or RM10 can be significant. Making the service free would help a lot of patients," she said.

She also noted that medicine delivery services help patients avoid long waits at hospital pharmacies.

"When we go to the hospital, we have to queue up.

"With home delivery, our routine medicines arrive at the comfort of our own home, making the whole process much more convenient," she added.

Separately, retiree and former media industry employee LY Looi, 61, welcomed the announcement,

noting that she also pays for medicine delivery for her 93-year-old father, who lives nearby in Petaling Jaya.

Both are patients of Klinik Kesihatan Kelana Jaya and receive their medication every few months at different times through the Health Ministry's MyUBAT app.

"Even though the delivery costs only between RM5.70 and RM6

each time, it's still savings for a retiree like me who is careful about my spending," said Looi.

Another patient, who wished to be known as Mohamad Sabri, 55, from Perlis, said he welcomed the government's announcement.

"For patients living far from hospitals, especially in rural areas, medicine delivery services could eliminate the need for long journeys and make healthcare more accessible.

"I hope this type of initiative will be expanded to more people."

# Building a healthcare ecosystem

## M'sia intensifies efforts to promote itself as a global supply chain hub

By QISTINA SALLEHUDDIN  
qistina.atikah@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia is strengthening its position as a trusted healthcare supply chain hub amid growing geopolitical and trade uncertainties that are prompting global buyers to seek reliable alternative sources of medical products and services.

Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) chief executive officer (CEO) Yusof said the corporation is intensifying efforts to promote Malaysia's healthcare ecosystem globally as international buyers look to diversify their sourcing strategies and build more resilient supply chains.

He said growing geopolitical tensions and disruptions to global trade routes have underscored the importance of building more resilient healthcare supply chains to ensure uninterrupted access to essential medical products and services.

"In healthcare, this disruption carries consequences far beyond operational inefficiencies.

"They threaten the reliable availability of essential medicines, medical products and life-saving treatments.

"As such, ensuring supply chain resilience is not merely a business priority, it is a strategic imperative that underpins healthcare continuity, national preparedness, and global health security," he said at a press conference yesterday ahead of the International



**Strategic edge:** (From left) Matrade Oil & Gas, Chemical & Energy Section and Lifestyle & Life Science Division director Omar Mohd Salleh, Abu Bakar, Informa Markets Malaysia country general manager Gerard Leeuwenburgh, Informa Markets Malaysia organising chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Nasir Mohd Ashraf and Chitanuwat at the IHW 2026 press conference. — LOW LAY PHON/The Star

Healthcare Week (IHW).

As part of efforts to expand Malaysia's global healthcare footprint, Matrade, alongside its partner Informa Markets, will lead a Malaysian delegation to the IHW 2026 in Bangkok from July 8 to 10.

IHW is South-East Asia's integrated platform for pharmaceuticals, medical technology, healthcare services, wellness and healthcare innovation.

Each edition brings together leading international healthcare exhibitions to create a comprehensive marketplace for industry collaboration, investment and knowledge exchange.

Malaysia will be organising the IHW 2027 on July 13 to 15 at the Malaysia International Trade and

Exhibition Centre (Mitec), Kuala Lumpur, next year.

The event will bring together three major healthcare exhibitions, including CPHI South East Asia, WHX Bangkok and MedTech South East Asia, and is expected to attract about 950 exhibitors and 26,000 trade visitors.

Informa Markets Regional Portfolio director Rungphech Chitanuwat said the event arrives as the regional healthcare and medical technology industry expands rapidly.

"IHW reflects our commitment to build an integrated platform that connects the entire healthcare value chain across South-East Asia.

"In just a few weeks, we are

ready to welcome and host the region in Bangkok, where pharmaceuticals, medical technology, healthcare services, wellness and innovation will come together under one roof.

"This is a defining moment for the industry, and we look forward to opening our doors to partners, exhibitors and visitors from around the world."

Meanwhile, Abu Bakar said disruptions to critical trade corridors, particularly in the Middle East, have exposed vulnerabilities in global supply networks and highlighted risks to the availability of essential medicines, medical products and life-saving treatments.

"In healthcare, this disruption carries consequences far beyond operational inefficiencies.

"They threaten the reliable availability of essential medicines, medical products and life-saving treatments, and this is why platforms like IHW matter now more than ever."

He added that Malaysia's commitment to strengthen and diversify supply chains reflects its responsibility to anticipate emerging risks and safeguard uninterrupted access to healthcare, while positioning the country as a dependable partner in the global healthcare ecosystem.

He added that Asean is increasingly seen as a stable and attractive alternative sourcing hub amid global uncertainty, with Malaysia well positioned to support this shift.

"Malaysia, with our robust

manufacturing capacity, neutral diplomatic stance and world-class infrastructure, stands ready to be that secure, dependable partner."

He also said Malaysia's healthcare sector continues to demonstrate strong export performance, underpinned by its medical manufacturing base.

Medical device exports reached RM34.54bil last year, driven by products such as medical gloves, precision needles, catheters, orthopaedic products and electro-diagnostic equipment, he said.

Pharmaceutical exports also recorded strong growth, rising 20.6% year-on-year to RM3.66bil.

Beyond manufacturing, he said Malaysia has strengthened its position as a regional healthcare destination through internationally accredited medical facilities, a skilled workforce, and the adoption of advanced medical technologies.

The country's private healthcare sector attracted 1.84 million international patients last year, generating RM3.34bil in revenue.

Abu Bakar said this performance reflects Malaysia's combination of cost competitiveness and high clinical standards, with many private hospitals accredited by the Malaysian Society for Quality in Health (MSQH) and Joint Commission International (JCI).

He said the growth is also helping to create high-value jobs, retain medical specialists, and support continued investment in advanced healthcare technologies.

COMMENT by Sayed Mohammad Reza Yamani Sayed Umar

## Dividends of investing in productive ageing

**MALAYSIA** is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with projections indicating that by 2030, one in five Malaysians will be aged 60 and above due to increased life expectancy and declining birth rates.

This "silver tsunami" presents both challenges and opportunities, prompting a shift in how ageing is perceived rather than a period of decline.

At the forefront of this transformation are the Pusat Aktiviti Warga Emas (Pawe) or Elderly Activity Centres, which serve as vital community hubs promoting active, healthy and socially productive ageing.

Pawe centres contribute significantly to the physical health, cognitive well-being, social connectedness and economic participation of older Malaysians, making them an important pillar in the country's transition towards an ageing society.

Productive ageing, conceptualised by Robert Butler in the 1980s, is a framework that promotes the continued engagement of older adults in economic, social and civic activities. This paradigm aligns with Malaysia's National Policy for Older Persons 2011, which prioritises active and healthy ageing.

Since their establishment in 1998, Pawe centres have aimed to turn idle seniors into vibrant contributors by offering programmes that address physical, cognitive and social needs. They do not compel senior citizens to work or remain economically active but rather recognise that older adults still possess valuable knowledge, skills, experience and wisdom and their contribution may come through paid work, volunteerism, caregiving, mentoring, community involvement or the preservation of cultural and religious heritage. This way, older persons can remain valuable contributors to the

nation's social fabric.

To tackle physical inactivity – a major risk factor for chronic diseases affecting around 60% of seniors – Pawe provides activities such as aerobics, *tai chi* and swimming.

Cognitive engagement is facilitated through workshops on memory games and digital literacy, which are crucial as digital skills become increasingly essential. Social isolation, reported by 20% to 30% of urban elderly, can be negated through communal activities and events that foster connections.

Economically, Pawe empowers seniors through entrepreneurship programmes, enabling participants to sell handmade goods and increase income from home-based ventures. For example, a member from Selangor turned her quilting skills into a successful small business. Lifelong learning initiatives, spanning skills in handicrafts and basic technology, can further promote independence and dignity among older individuals.

In a multicultural context, Pawe centres also foster intergenerational bonds by connecting older persons with youth through mentoring in traditional arts and storytelling, thereby helping to mitigate loneliness that may be exacerbated by migration patterns.

In urban areas, centres have also begun incorporating gerontechnology innovations, in line with Malaysia's broader digital economy agenda.

Pawe centres also enable seniors to give back to society by sharing their experiences and knowledge, shifting perceptions of seniors from dependents to active community contributors. This engagement helps to alleviate caregiver burdens while strengthening intergenerational solidarity within families and communities.

– However, challenges persist, particularly in



Productive ageing is a framework that promotes the continued engagement of older adults in economic, social and civic activities. – **BERNAMAPIC**

rural areas where funding constraints and transportation barriers limit access for many older persons. Training staff in emerging technologies is essential for effective service delivery. The Covid-19 pandemic further exposed vulnerabilities, disrupting activities and worsening mental health outcomes among older persons.

Pawe centres must adapt to evolving needs with recommendations for increased funding through public-private partnerships, expanded tech integration for senior-friendly applications and the establishment of additional centres in underserved areas.

Linking Pawe initiatives with food security and urban farming can enhance nutritional and economic opportunities for seniors.

Productive ageing, as facilitated by Pawe, is framed as a strategic investment in Malaysia's future, contributing to resilient communities,

alleviating pension burdens and upholding cultural respect for elders.

As emphasised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim: "Ageing is Malaysia's dividend, not debt."

Strengthening Pawe will ensure that seniors can age with dignity, purpose and joy. Ultimately, productive ageing is rooted in respect, participation and continuous contribution. This approach supports the creation of an age-friendly Malaysia that enables seniors to remain engaged and valued members of society.

**Sayed Mohammad Reza Yamani Sayed Umar** is a research fellow at the Ungku Aziz Centre for Development Studies, Universiti Malaya and a part-time lecturer at Azman Hashim International Business School, UTM.  
Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

## 'UBAT MELALUI POS' PROGRAMME

# Govt to cover cost of medication delivery by post

**PUTRAJAYA:** The government will fully bear the cost of delivering medication to about 80,000 patients a month under the "Ubat Melalui Pos" (UMP) programme, which is set to kick off next month, said Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

He said the initiative, a collaboration between the Health Ministry and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), involves an estimated cost of RM5.69 million per year, which will be fully borne by the Communications Ministry and MCMC.

He said the move would ensure that patients eligible under the UMP programme no longer need to bear the cost of medication delivery.

"We hope that by July, we can start this initiative in every state.

So, the cost will no longer be borne by any party, especially the patients. It will be fully borne by the government," he said.

He said this at media conference after the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Health Ministry and MCMC for the National Digital Health Ecosystem and Connectivity Catalyst (Persada) initiative here yesterday.

Fahmi said the selection of patients eligible for the UMP programme would be determined entirely by the Health Ministry, while delivery services will be managed by Pos Malaysia Bhd, as a licensee under MCMC.

He said Persada, a joint initiative by the Health Ministry and MCMC, was aimed at strengthening the digitalisation of the healthcare system, with the project estimated

to cost RM650 million.

He said it would be implemented in two phases, with phase one involving an estimated cost of RM74 million.

He said funding for Persada would be managed by MCMC through the Universal Services Provision Fund.

In another development, Fahmi said the National Information Dissemination Centre would be strengthened as an early health and telehealth screening centre, particularly in rural and remote areas that have limited access to healthcare facilities.

He said the initiative, implemented since 2023, would be expanded to enable residents to undergo medical screenings, such as blood sugar and blood pressure checks, without having to travel far to hospitals or clinics.

## KKM sasar 81 peratus pesakit terima rawatan dalam sejam

**PUTRAJAYA** - Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) menyasarkan 81 peratus pesakit menerima rawatan dalam tempoh sejam menerusi Program Pemacu Ekosistem dan Ketersambungan Kesihatan Digital Negara (Persada) yang dijangka dilaksanakan secara menyeluruh menjelang suku pertama 2027.

Menteri Kesihatan, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad berkata, inisiatif strategik antara KKM dan Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (MCMC) itu akan meningkatkan kesalinghubungan digital fasiliti kesihatan, sekali gus mengurangkan tempoh menunggu dan melancarkan perjalanan rawatan pesakit.

Beliau berkata, manfaat digitalan mula diterjemahkan kepada pengalaman rakyat apabila data semasa menunjukkan 63 peratus pesakit menerima perkhidmatan dalam tempoh menunggu kurang daripada 30 minit manakala 18 peratus menerima perkhidmatan dalam tempoh antara 30 hingga 60 minit.

"Usaha transformasi digital yang sedang dilaksanakan oleh KKM mula menunjukkan hasil memberangsangkan. Sehingga April 2026, sejumlah 4.21 juta individu berdaftar dalam ekosis-

tem digital kesihatan.

"Dalam tempoh sama, lebih 22.41 juta transaksi digital direkodkan dengan purata sekitar 75,000 transaksi setiap hari," katanya pada sidang media selepas majlis menandatangani Memorandum Persefahaman (MoU) antara KKM dan MCMC bagi inisiatif Persada di sini pada Isnin.

MoU itu ditandatangani Pengerusi MCMC, Tan Sri Mohamad Salim Fateh Din dan Ketua Setiausaha (KSU) Kementerian Kesihatan, Datuk Seri Hasnol Zam Zam Ahmad serta disaksikan Menteri Komunikasi, Datuk Fahmi Fadzil dan Dzulkefly.

Dr Dzulkefly berkata, lebih 2,000 klinik kesihatan akan mendapat akses kepada sistem pengurusan klinikal berasaskan awan (CCMS), selain menyokong pelaksanaan rekod perubatan elektronik (EMR) yang membolehkan rekod pesakit diakses secara bersepadu antara hospital dan klinik awam.

Beliau berkata, ketika ini 500 klinik kesihatan daripada lebih 3,000 klinik di seluruh negara mempunyai capaian digital dengan Labuan dan Langkawi antara lokasi yang mencapai kesalinghubungan menyeluruh.

- *Bernama*