AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 17
RUANGAN : SETEMPAT

DR Hilmi, (dua dari kanan) melihat mesin CT Scan Siemens Simptom Scope 32 slices yang terdapat di HSAH, semalam.

Enam juta pilih hospital, klinik kerajaan

Sungai Petani: Terdapat enam juta pertambahan jumlah pesakit luar direkodkan mendapatkan perkhidmatan di hospital dan klinik kerajaan di seluruh negara sepanjang tahun lalu.

Timbalan Menteri Kesihatan Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya berkata, jumlah itu termasuk pesakit yang pernah menerima rawatan di hospital swasta, tetapi beralih kepada hospital dan klinik kerajaan.

"Perkhidmatan kesihatan negara adalah antara terbaik di dunia. Oleh itu, pada tahun lalu, kami mencatatkan peningkatan pesakit luar enam juta orang.

"Jumlah ini turut disebabkan caj yang murah iaitu pesakit hanya perlu membayar RM1 untuk mendapatkan rawatan dan juga ubat-ubatan," katanya ketika ditemui selepas merasmikan Mesin CT Scan Jabatan Pengimejan dan Diagnostik Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim (HSAH), di sini, semalam.

Mesin CT Scan berkenaan adalah satu modaliti pengimejan perubatan bertekonologi tinggi yang pertama dipasang di HSAH.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : NEWS/ STORY OF THE DAY

REPORTS BY: FARHANA SYED NOKMAN, ROSLI ZAKARIA, NURADZIMMAH DAIM, HIDIR REDUAN AND ADIE SURI ZULKEFLI

IMMUNISATION

PUZZLED BY PARENTS' ANTI-VACCINE STAND

Many are influenced by others, or choose to rely on alternative treatments

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THE reasons behind the increasing number of children in the country who did not receive vaccination are as puzzling as they are surprising.

Reports compiled in several states discovered varying reasons that were conservative and feeble despite the many efforts to create greater awareness of the importance of immunisation.

Traditional treatments, homeopathy, the halal-haram status of vaccines, influence of friends or family members, social media and even anti-vaccine movements involving doctors were among the reasons.

Checks by the *New Straits Times* in Kuala Terengganu revealed that there are hundreds of parents who remained adamant about rejecting immunisation for their children, despite receiving counselling from the authorities.

The Terengganu Education director said 265 parents stood by their decision even after teams of medical specialists visited their homes to educate them on vaccine-preventable diseases.

The Pahang Health director said there were parents and guardians who expressed doubts on the content of the vaccines, adding that such skewed thinking could lead to the spread of infectious diseases.

He said this was the reason why certain preventable diseases still occurred in the state.

The worrying trend has also prompted the Kedah government to seek to ascertain the number of pupils who had failed to receive vaccinations. This came after the state recorded the highest number of vaccine rejections in the country with 318 cases last year.

Last month, Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya revealed in Parliament that nearly 1,600 children did not receive vaccination last year, compared with 1,500 in 2015.

Among the states with high numbers were Perak, Kedah, Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kelantan, Penang and Selangor.

He said his ministry had implemented various initiatives to boost public confidence on the use of vaccines.

These included the launching of the 2016-2020 Immunisation Promotion programme, organising vaccination awareness campaigns, talks, workshops and publishing articles on vaccination, which were distributed to health clinics nationwide.

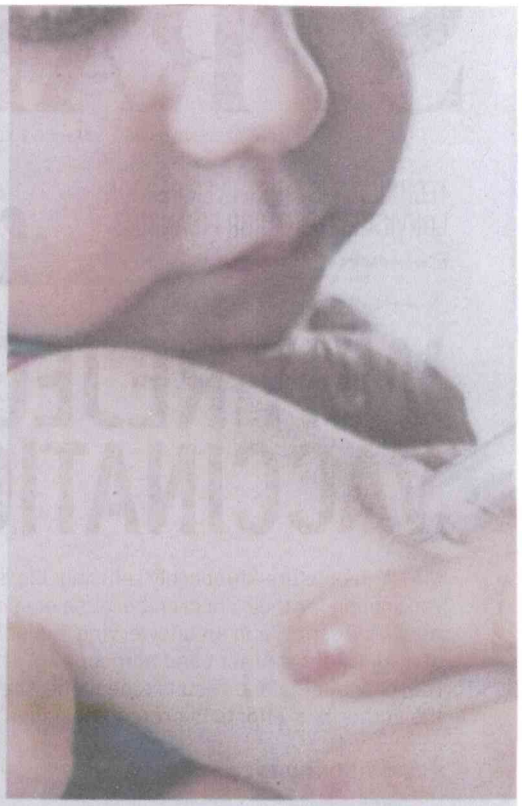
The ministry had also collaborated with the Malaysian Paediatric Association since 2013 and developed the Immunise For Life website aimed at promoting immunisation to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases.

Dr Hilmi had said 95 per cent of children in Malaysia had been vaccinated, and that the number was considered high and in accordance with World Health Organisation standards.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr John Chew Chee Ming said the fear of side-effects could be the reason why parents refused to vaccinate their children.

"Correct information on the benefits of vaccination will go a long way in getting parents to vaccinate their children."

He said the anti-vaccine movement appeared to be popular because of social media, adding that certain doctors were allegedly involved in the movement.



Kedah checking how many not vaccinated

SUNGAI PETANI: The state government will get all primary schools to submit a report on vaccination screening of pupils to district education offices.

State Education and Transportation Committee chairman Datuk Tajul Urus Mat Zain said the state government would study the reports to ascertain how many pupils in Kedah had not been vaccinated.

"We will ask the schools' administrations to call up parents whose children have yet to be vaccinated, for consultation," he said, adding he would meet the Kedah Education Department on issuing a circular on the matter.

"It is crucial for parents to be given proper advice on the importance of immunisation.

"We had fatal diphtheria cases involving two siblings at the Paya Nahu Flats last year," he said here recently.

Last July, Education Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid reportedly said the ministry was ready to carry out vaccination screenings at 7,000 national and vernacular primary schools nationwide.

The screenings were suggested by the Health Ministry in light of a rise in diphtheria cases last year.

Diphtheria, a vaccine-preventable disease, is a bacterial infection that affects the mucous membranes of the throat and nose, and symptoms usually emerge between two and seven days after infection.

The disease can cause life-threatening complications, such as myocarditis, paralysis and kidney failure. A vaccine against diphtheria is administered when an infant is at 2, 3 and 4 months old. A booster dose is administered when the infant is 18 months old.

Kedah recorded the highest number of vaccine rejection cases in the country with 318 cases last year, and more than the 239 cases in 2014.

Last June, a 2-year-old boy Muhammad Harris Haikal Amdin died due to diphtheria, followed by his 11-month-old brother Muhammad Rushaidi Rizqi a month later. It was reported that the siblings had not completed their scheduled vaccinations.

Pahang worries over upward trend in those not vaccinated

KUANTAN: The upward trend in the number of children who are not vaccinated in the state is a cause for concern.

State Health director Dr Sha'ari Ngadiman said there were 178 cases detected last year, an increase from 126 in 2015 and 84 in 2014.

Dr Sha'ari Ngadiman

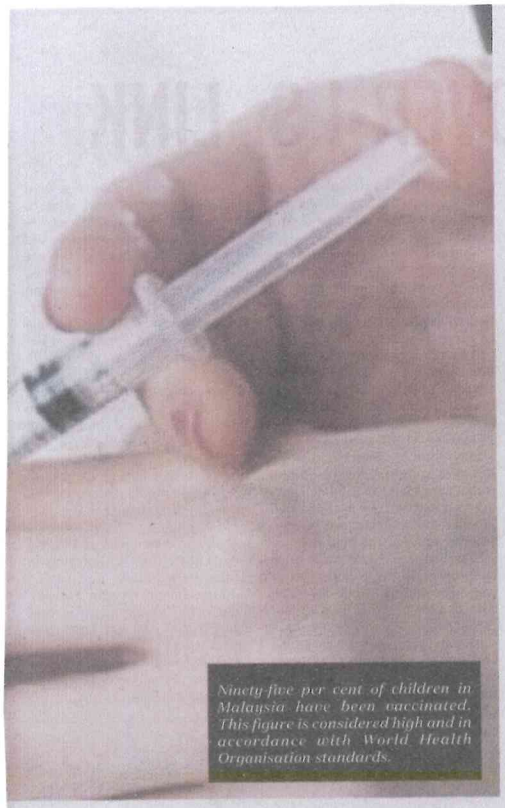
Dr Sha'ari said the main reason behind the refusal of vaccination for children involved the issue of halal-haram (what is allowed or prohibited in Islam), doubts (by certain parents and guardians) on the content of vaccines, the practice of alternative treatments like homeopathy, as well as influence of family members or friends.

"The phenomena of parents or guardians refusing to allow their children to receive immunisation is worrying because it could endanger the children, as well as potentially become the cause of spread of an infection."

He said this situation had led to preventable diseases such as Hepatitis B, measles and whooping cough (bacterial infection that causes coughs and cold-like symptoms) to still occur in Pahang.

"As at April 3, there were 10 confirmed cases of measles reported in Pahang, compared with 30 cases for the same pe-

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NEWS/ STORY OF THE DAY



Ninety-five per cent of children in Malaysia have been vaccinated. This figure is considered high and in accordance with World Health Organisation standards.

265 parents still refuse to allow kids to be immunised after counselling

KUALA TERENGGANU: There are at least 265 parents who stood by their decision to reject vaccination for their children in the state despite efforts to convince them otherwise.

Health and education authorities have gone out of their way to advise and counsel parents on the need to immunise their children, but there were those who were adamant with their decision.

Terengganu recorded an increase in the number of children who failed to get vaccinations from 42 cases in 2013 to 281 cases last year due to rejection by parents who were worried about the content of the vaccine and its halal-haram status.

State Education director Dr Mohammad Omar said the upward trend was worrying and efforts had been made to provide counselling to parents by medical specialists.

"For those who refused to attend counselling sessions, our team of medical specialists will visit them at home. However, our records showed 265 parents stood by their decision to reject vaccination even after counselling.

... it becomes a collective responsibility of parents to ensure that the community is protected from contagious diseases. Parents must not fall prey to campaigns by anti-vaccination movements...

DR MOHAMMAD OMAR
Terengganu Education director

"In such cases, our staff at the respective health clinics will monitor the progress of the child and identify vaccine-preventable diseases. Parents were also advised to bring their children to hospital immediately if symptoms developed," he said.

Dr Mohammad said health officers would also try to identify children who missed vaccinations during their house-to-house calls in areas under their watch and would provide a new vaccination schedule for the child.

"Among our efforts to create awareness is providing pamphlets on immunisation at all 47 health clinics and six hospitals in the state.

"Pregnant mothers were also educated on the importance of immunisation during health checks at every clinic."

He advised parents to take immunisation seriously because some contagious diseases could be fatal to their children.

"As a member of society, it becomes a collective responsibility of parents to ensure that the community is protected from contagious diseases.

"Parents must not fall prey to campaigns by anti-vaccination movements, whether by persons or through the Internet," he said.

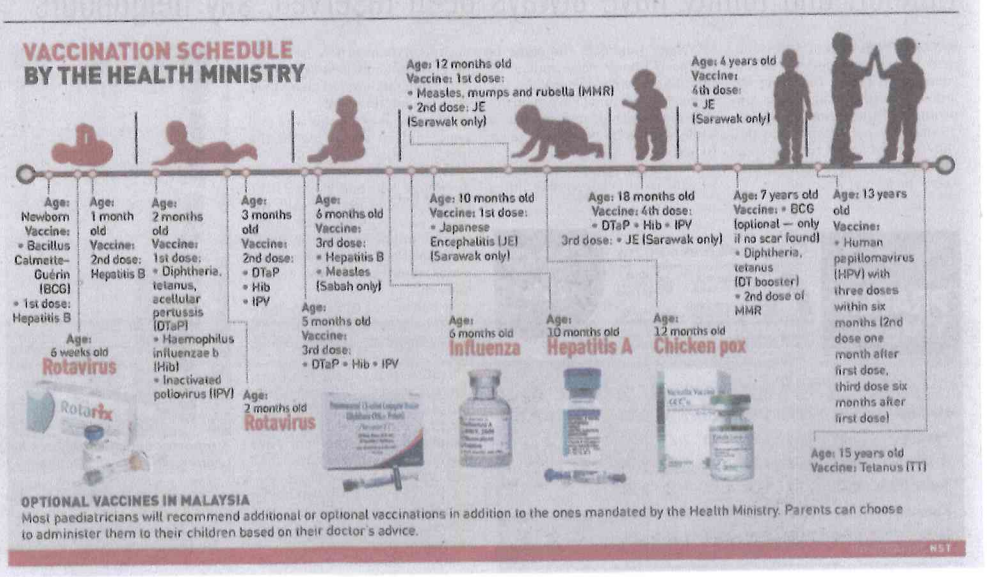
Other reasons include influence of husbands, practice of Sunnah dietery and traditional treatment, homeopathy and belief that diseases would not harm them even when not immunised.

Dr Mohammad said last year, of the 26,209 births, 98.7 per cent received BCG, 100 per cent for Hepatitis B Dos 3, 101 per cent for diphtheria-tetanus-pertussia-polio-hemophilis influenza Dos 3 and 109 per cent for measles-mumps-rubella.

riod in 2016," he said, adding that there had been three measles outbreaks this year, unlike one single outbreak for the whole of last year.

He noted that cases of measles this year involved those aged between 1 and 36 years old, with 70 per cent made up of those aged between 21 and 36 years old, with the remainder comprised babies not qualified to receive immunisation.

Dr Sha'ari said the state Health Department sought to combat the problem by raising awareness on the importance of children receiving their complete immunisation, through the mass media and social media.

To this end, he said the department would cooperate with other government agencies and the community.

Currently, the state government provides free immunisation through 84 health clinics, five health clinics for mothers and children, 239 rural clinics and 11 hospitals.