

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 1

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

COVID-19

Kadar kebolehjangkitan makin membimbangkan

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Kuala Lumpur: Kadar kebolehjangkitan (Rt) kes COVID-19 di negara ini terus meningkat apabila mencatatkan purata 1.19 kelmarin dengan Kelantan diselubungi kebimbangan penularan wabak itu ekoran catatan Rt tertinggi iaitu 1.32.

Selain Kelantan merekodkan kadar tertinggi, enam negeri lain turut mencatat Rt melebihi

purata kebangsaan ialah Kuala Lumpur (1.27), Sarawak (1.23), Terengganu (1.21), Sabah (1.21) dan Negeri Sembilan (1.20).

Nilai Rt merujuk kepada tahap kebolehjangkitan sesuatu kes COVID-19 iaitu berapa ramai individu boleh dijangkiti oleh satu kes positif. Semakin rendah nilai itu, semakin kurang kemungkinan jangkitan bagi setiap kes positif.

Kes harian positif COVID-19 juga kembali melonjak dan mencatatkan lebih 2,000 kes empat

1.32

Kadar kebolehjangkitan (Rt) di Kelantan

1.19

Kadar kebolehjangkitan (Rt) kebangsaan

berturut-turut sejak Khamis lalu.

Mengulas situasi terkini, bekas Timbalan Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan (Perubatan), Datuk Dr Rohaizat Yon, berkata ada kemungkinan Malaysia memasuki gelombang keempat penularan COVID-19 dengan lebih cepat.

Katanya, jika situasi itu berlaku, negara secara tidak langsung bakal berdepan risiko yang lebih teruk.

Nasional 2



Pengetua Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMR) Sultan Ismail, Raja Anoro Raja Kob meletak notis memaklumkan penutupan sekolah mulai semalam sehingga 24 April susulan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) di Kelantan akibat peningkatan ketara kes COVID-19 dilaporkan berlaku di sekolah negeri itu sama ada berpunca daripada guru atau murid.
(Foto Nik Abdullah Nik Omar / BH)

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

23 peratus kes bukan jangkitan kontak rapat

Dari Muka 1

Beliau menegaskan, dalam situasi sekarang, pematuhan prosedur operasi standard (SOP) di semua peringkat adalah amat penting, sementara menunggu program imunisasi dilaksanakan sepenuhnya.

Ketua Unit Kawalan Infeksi Hospital Canselor Tuanku Muhriz, Dr Sharifah Azura Salleh, berkata dalam usaha memutuskan rantaian pandemik, semua lapisan masyarakat perlu mengubah cara hidup dan bukan bergantung kepada kerajaan semata-mata.

Beliau berkata, semua sektor yang dibuka ketika ini boleh berjalan seperti biasa jika masyarakat patuh kepada SOP ditetapkan.

Sementara itu, Menteri Besar Kelantan, Datuk Ahmad Yakob, melahirkan kebimbangan walaupun tujuh daerah di negeri itu

dikenakan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) sejak Jumaat lalu hingga 29 April ini, masih ada 2,627 sampel menanti keputusan ujian COVID-19.

"Lebih membimbangkan penggunaan katil hospital serta Pusat Kuarantin dan Rawatan COVID-19 (PKRC) semakin meningkat.

"Sebanyak 23 peratus daripada kes COVID-19 yang dikesan tidak membabitkan kontak rapat, ia menunjukkan jangkitan dalam komuniti sangat tinggi. Langkah penutupan sekolah dalam kawasan PKP terpaksa dilaksana berikutan 30 peratus jangkitan dalam kalangan warga sekolah.

"Justeru, beberapa langkah akan diambil bagi mengatasi penularan di tempat kerja, sekolah, masjid dan komuniti," katanya sambil mengajak umat Islam negeri itu mengadakan solat hajat serta memperbanyakkan bacaan

al-Quran serta bersedekah.

Dalam kenyataannya, Ahmad meminta kerjasama semua pihak untuk memainkan peranan serta tanggungjawab masing-masing membendung penularan dengan mematuhi SOP ditetapkan.

"Semoga Allah SWT memberi perlindungan dan kesejahteraan kepada negeri Kelantan daripada COVID-19," katanya dengan Kelantan merekodkan 332 kes baharu semalam.

Malam kelmarin, Jabatan Pendidikan Kelantan mengarahkan sekolah dan institusi pendidikan di bawah Kementerian Pelajaran (KPM) di tujuh daerah yang dikenakan PKP di negeri itu ditutup bermula semalam hingga 24 April.

Penutupan itu membabitkan 472 sekolah rendah dan menengah, Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG) selain tadika kerajaan dan swasta yang berdaftar dengan KPM.

Data dikongsi Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, menunjukkan lonjakan kadar Rt dialami ketika ini, berlaku lebih pantas berbanding unjuran Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) kes harian melonjak kepada lebih 2,000 pada pertengahan Mei, sekiranya Rt mencecah 1.2 berikutan ketidakpatuhan SOP.

Peningkatan Rt juga menyebabkan beberapa negeri kini berdepan situasi pandemik yang semakin memburuk dalam tempoh 14 hari taburan kes sejak 4 April lalu hingga kelmarin, antaranya Terengganu, Kelantan, Perak, Johor, Pahang, Kedah dan Sarawak.

Situasi itu juga menyaksikan 68 daerah di seluruh negara dengan 46 di Semenanjung, kini menjadi Zon Merah penularan COVID-19.

Berdasarkan data itu, hanya 17 daerah Zon Hijau yang bebas kes COVID-19 dicatatkan kelmarin

dan tujuh daripadanya di Semenanjung, selain 50 daerah Zon Kuning dan 24 daerah Zon Jingga.

Terengganu antara negeri mencatat kemerosotan kawalan wabak ketara apabila merekodkan dua daerah Zon Merah dan dua Zon Jingga kelmarin, berbanding situasi bebas Zon Merah dan Jingga pada 4 April lalu.

Sepanjang tempoh sama, daerah Zon Merah di Kelantan bertambah daripada empat kepada tujuh, manakala Perak merekodkan pertambahan daripada hanya satu Zon Merah dan dua Zon Hijau pada 4 April, kepada tiga Zon Merah dan tiada lagi Zon Hijau.

Situasi turut memburuk di Sarawak apabila daerah Zon Merah meningkat daripada 11 kepada 16 daerah dalam tempoh 14 hari lalu, selain jumlah daerah Zon Hijau menurun daripada tujuh kepada hanya empat.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Kaji trend peningkatan kes babit kluster sedia ada

Penilaian risiko paling tepat, teratur perlu dilaksanakan segera

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Kuala Lumpur: Kerajaan perlu mengkaji semula trend peningkatan kes COVID-19 membabitkan kluster sedia ada bagi mengelak kadar kebolehjangkitan atau R-naught (Rt) negara terus meningkat.

Bekas Timbalan Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan (Perubatan), Datuk Dr Rohaizat Yon, berkata penilaian risiko paling tepat, teratur dan teliti, terutama dalam sektor sosial juga perlu dilaksanakan segera bagi mengesahkan penularan pandemik itu.

"Kita perlu memberi tumpuan kepada trend kluster yang ada, tempat di mana peningkatan itu berlaku seperti kluster membabitkan sekolah dan tempat kerja. Mungkin penambahbaikan perlu dibuat dalam menangani peningkatan kes dan trend kluster.

"Kita sudah melihat adanya kluster tempat kerja, rumah panjang dan majlis perkahwinan. Pengajaran yang kita peroleh di sini ialah prosedur operasi standard (SOP) itu tidak dipatuhi sepenuhnya," katanya ketika dihubungi BH, semalam.

Jika SOP masih gagal dipatuhi dengan sepenuhnya, Dr Rohaizat berkata, kemungkinan Malaysia memasuki gelombang keempat penularan COVID-19 adalah lebih cepat dan secara tidak langsung berdepan risiko lebih teruk.

Tegasnya, pematuan SOP pada semua peringkat masih menjadi perkara penting sementara menunggu program imunisasi dilaksanakan sepenuhnya.

"Kita lihat di Korea Selatan ada satu kluster di sebuah restoran, ramai yang dijangkiti, tetapi ada beberapa pekerjanya bebas COVID-19.

"Apabila ditanya, mereka memaklumkan tidak pernah membuka pelitup muka dan sentiasa mematuhi SOP sepanjang bekerja. Jadi ikut SOP sepenuhnya, (kita) selamat.

"Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) ada meramalkan COVID-19 meningkat pada Ramadan, jadi itu satu cabaran.

"Jika kita jaga SOP, itu tidak

Kita perlu beri tumpuan kepada trend kluster yang ada, tempat di mana peningkatan itu berlaku seperti kluster membabitkan sekolah dan tempat kerja

Dr Rohaizat Yon, Bekas Timbalan Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan (Perubatan)



akan berlaku sama seperti ramalan JP Morgan, iaitu pada April akan ada lebih 6,000 kes. Itu tidak berlaku sebab kita ada tindakan," katanya.

Mengulas keperluan menutup sektor sosial seperti bazar Ramadan, Ketua Unit Kawalan Infeksi Hospital Canselor Tuanku Muhriz, Dr Sharifah Azura Salleh, berkata ia tidak perlu dilaksanakan kerana aktiviti ter-

babit adalah keperluan harian, malah boleh meletakkan negara dalam situasi yang lebih parah.

Beliau yang juga pakar mikrobiologi perubatan berkata, semua sektor berkenaan boleh berjalan seperti biasa jika masyarakat patuh kepada SOP ditetapkan.

"Untuk memutuskan rantaian ini, kita sendiri kena ubah cara hidup, bukan bergantung sepenuhnya kepada kerajaan.

"Apa yang kerajaan buat seperti tidak boleh merentas (negeri), hanya sikit kesannya,

"Impak paling besar adalah diri kita sendiri, iaitu patuh kepada SOP. Misalnya, kita tidak boleh menyalahkan guru atau murid dalam kes kluster sekolah kerana mereka dijangkiti daripada masyarakat sebelum membawanya ke sekolah.

"Itu sebabnya kita perlu kembali kepada SOP, tanamkan dalam diri dan menjadikannya sebagai tabiat," katanya.

Situasi penularan COVID-19 di Malaysia terus merosot apabila kadar Rt COVID-19 mengikut kes harian kekal pada trend peningkatan kepada 1.19, kelmarin.

Ia adalah nilai Rt tertinggi pernah direkodkan tahun ini, selepas 1.17 yang dicatatkan pada 16 Januari lalu.

99.9 peratus tak dijangkiti selepas dapat 2 dos vaksin

Kuala Terengganu: Bilangan 40 petugas kesihatan dijangkiti COVID-19 adalah sangat kecil berbanding 438,000 atau 99.9 peratus yang tidak dijangkiti selepas menerima dua dos vaksin.

Timbalan Menteri Sains, Teknologi dan Inovasi, Datuk Ahmad Amzad Hashim, berkata jumlah itu juga menunjukkan kejayaan Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) apabila berlaku penurunan 10 kali ganda berbanding purata jangkitan 436 kes sebelum sebelum divaksin ketika gelombang pertama COVID-19 melanda negara Mac tahun lalu.

"Sebanyak 99.9 peratus (petugas kesihatan) menerima dua dos vaksin tidak dijangkiti COVID-19 walaupun mereka adalah barisan hadapan yang setiap hari berurusan dengan pesakit wabak itu.

"Mereka lebih terdedah kepada risiko jangkitan kerana kita maklum kes positif tinggi, iaitu mencecah lebih 2,000 kes positif sehari berbanding hanya puluhan dan ratusan kes positif pada tahun lalu.

"Dalam kenyataan Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, 40 petugas kesihatan dijangkiti COVID-19 didapati tidak menunjukkan gejala teruk dan ia selari dengan perkembangan di negara lebih awal melaksanakan program vaksinasi, iaitu penurunan yang signifikan dalam kes COVID-19," katanya dalam kenyataan di sini, semalam.

3 negeri catat jangkitan satu angka, Sarawak tertinggi

Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) semalam merekodkan pertambahan 2,195 kes jangkitan COVID-19, bagi menjadikan jumlah dilaporkan kepada 375,054 kes.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata Sarawak mencatat jumlah kes harian tertinggi hari ini (semalam), iaitu 508 kes, disusuli Selangor dengan 431 kes, dan Johor (387).

Beliau berkata, tiga negeri mencatat kes satu angka, iaitu Labuan dengan enam kes dan masing-masing tiga kes baharu di Putrajaya dan Perlis.

"Hari ini (semalam), Sarawak melaporkan kes harian baharu tertinggi, iaitu 508 kes (23.1 peratus) dan daripada jumlah ini,

sebanyak 372 kes (73.2 peratus) adalah daripada kluster dan saringan kontak rapat kes positif COVID-19 di lapangan.

"Ini diikuti Selangor dengan 431 kes (19.6 peratus) dan Johor sebanyak 387 kes (17.6 peratus).

"Sejumlah 18 kes (0.8 peratus) yang dilaporkan adalah berkaitan kluster di penjara dan Depoh Tahanan Imigresen (DTI) membabitkan Kluster Jalan Salleh (11), Kluster Tembok Pengkalan Chepa (lima), dan masing-masing satu kes dalam Kluster Tembok Sri Aman serta Klus-

ter DTI Lenggeng.

"Sebanyak 2,185 kes adalah penularan tempatan dengan 1,837 warganegara dan 348 bukan warganegara manakala dua daripada 10 kes import adalah rakyat tempatan dan lapan lagi warga asing," katanya dalam satu kenyataan, semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, KKM merekodkan 19,854 kes aktif ketika ini, manakala 219 kes kini dirawat di Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) dengan 90 pesakit memerlukan alat bantuan pernafasan.

Katanya, lapan kematian ber-

kaitan COVID-19 direkodkan membabitkan warganegara, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kematian 1,378 kes (0.37 peratus), masing-masing dua kes di Selangor dan Kelantan, serta satu kes di Sarawak, Sabah, Pulau Pinang, dan Kuala Lumpur dengan semuanya berusia antara 37 hingga 90 tahun serta menghidap pelbagai penyakit kronik.

"Sebanyak 1,427 kes pulih direkodkan hari ini (semalam) menjadikan jumlah yang sembuh kepada 353,822 kes (94.3 peratus) setakat ini," katanya.

Sementara itu, KKM turut mengesan satu lagi kluster sekolah/institusi pendidikan di Sarawak.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, Kluster Jalan Bintulu Sibul itu, mem-

babitkan daerah Tatau dan Bintulu di Sarawak.

"Kes indeks bagi kluster ini ialah lelaki tempatan berusia 17 tahun yang dilaporkan positif COVID-19 pada 9 April lalu hasil saringan individu bergejala.

"Kes mula bergejala pada 8 April lalu. Kluster ini membabitkan pelajar dan kakitangan sebuah pusat pendidikan di Jalan Bintulu Sibul, Tatau.

"Sehingga hari ini (semalam), sejumlah 546 individu sudah disaring dengan 11 kes dikesan positif COVID-19 dalam kluster ini," katanya.

Semalam, KKM melaporkan tiga kluster jangkitan COVID-19 membabitkan institusi pendidikan/sekolah dikesan di Sarawak, Selangor dan Putrajaya.



Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

Terkini COVID-19 **1,427**

Pulih, dibenarkan keluar hospital, semalam

2,195 Kes baharu disahkan, semalam

1,378 Jumlah kematian dicatat

375,054 jumlah kes disahkan positif

19,854 kes yang masih dirawat

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : COVID-19

439,286 selesai dua dos vaksin

Kuala Lumpur: Seramai 439,286 individu dalam kumpulan fasa pertama Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan melengkapkan dua dos suntikan vaksin mereka setakat kelmarin.

Menteri Kesihatan Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba berkata bagi tempoh sama, 695,729 individu menerima dos pertama, menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan pemberian dos pertama dan kedua vaksin Covid-19 di negara ini kini berjumlah 1,135,015.

Menerusi infografik dikongsikan di laman Twitter rasminya semalam, Dr Adham berkata, lima negeri menerima suntikan

kan dos pertama vaksin tertinggi ialah Selangor dengan 98,469, diikuti Kuala Lumpur (78,087), Sarawak (68,608), Johor (65,159) dan Perak (57,200).

Lima negeri yang melengkapkan kedua-dua dos vaksin Covid-19 tertinggi setakat ini pula ialah Selangor dengan 63,160 individu, Perak (48,802), Sabah (43,268), Kuala Lumpur (38,642) dan Pahang (33,833).

Jumlah pendaftaran Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan adalah 8,946,750 atau 36.9 peratus dengan Selangor kekal merekodkan angka tertinggi 2,356,484 pendaftaran.

**Selangor kekal
merekodkan angka
tertinggi 2,356,484
pendaftaran**

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : COVID-19

2,195 dijangkiti koronavirus

Kes kumulatif meningkat kepada 375,054, lapan kematian babit warganegara dicatat

508 kes baharu di Sarawak

Oleh Amir Abd Hamid
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Kuala Lumpur

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) merekodkan 2,195 kes baharu penularan virus Covid-19, semalam menjadikan kes kumulatif 375,054 kes.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, daripada jumlah kes baharu itu sebanyak 2,185 kes penularan tempatan iaitu membabitkan 1,837 warganegara dan 348 bukan warganegara.

"Terdapat 10 kes import direkodkan hari ini (semalam) iaitu membabitkan dua warganegara dan lapan bukan warganegara.

"Kes aktif di negara ini dengan kebolehjangkitan penularan pandemik itu ketika ini 19,854 kes," katanya.

Menurutnya, jumlah kes sembuh semalam pula 1,427 menjadikan kes kumulatif



ANGGOTA polis bersama Rela membuat kawalan di laluan keluar masuk ke Sekolah Menengah Agama Kota Kinabalu yang dikenakan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Diperketatkan (PKPD) bermula semalam sehingga 1 Mei.

353,822 atau 94.3 peratus," katanya menerusi Twitter rasmi beliau hari ini.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata,

219 pesakit dirawat di Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) manakala 90 kes membabitkan penggunaan bantuan alat

pernafasan.

"Dukacita dimaklumkan ada lapan kematian direkodkan hari ini membabitkan

warganegara menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes kematian 1,378 atau 0.37 peratus," katanya.

Kuala Lumpur: Sebanyak 508 kes baharu positif jangkitan Covid-19 dicatatkan di Sarawak, sekali gus menjadikan negeri tertinggi penularan pandemik itu daripada keseluruhan 2,195 kes di seluruh negara semalam.

Menurut catatan grafik dikongsi Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah di akaun Twitturnya, negeri kedua tertinggi mencatatkan jangkitan baharu harian tertinggi adalah Selangor dengan 431 kes.

Ia diikuti Johor 387 kes dan Kelantan merekodkan 332 kes baharu.

Kuala Lumpur mencatat 176 kes diikuti Sabah sebanyak 112 kes, Pulau Pinang (84), Negeri Sembilan (42) dan Perak dengan 35 kes.

Seterusnya, Kedah merekodkan 30 kes baharu, Terengganu (16), Melaka (15) dan Pahang 15 kes.

Penularan jangkitan merekodkan angka satu digit semalam adalah Labuan enam kes dan Putrajaya serta Perlis mencatat tiga kes.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
 MUKA SURAT : 4
 RUANGAN : NEGARA

Lebih 400,000 individu lengkap terima dua dos vaksin Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Selangor terima dos vaksin tertinggi

Oleh NUR HUDA MUSA

PETALING JAYA – Seramai 439,286 individu dalam kumpulan fasa pertama Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan telah melengkapkan dua dos suntikan vaksin setakat kelmarin.

Menteri Kesihatan, Datuk Seri Dr. Adham Baba berkata, bagi tempoh sama 695,729 individu telah menerima dos pertama, menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan dos pertama dan kedua negara ini kini berjumlah 1,135,015.

Menerusi satu infografik yang dimuat naik di laman Twitter miliknya semalam, Dr. Adham memaklumkan lima negeri menerima suntikan dos pertama vaksin tertinggi ialah Selangor dengan jumlah 98,469 diikuti Kuala Lumpur (78,087), Sarawak (68,608), Johor (65,159) dan Perak (57,200).

Lima negeri yang telah melengkapkan kedua-dua dos suntikan vaksin tertinggi setakat ini pula ialah Selangor (63,160), Perak (48,802), Kuala Lumpur (38,642) dan Pahang (33,833).

Dalam pada itu turut dimaklumkan, jumlah pendaftaran penerima vaksin setakat ini adalah seramai 8,946,750 persamaan

COVID-19	
Angka terkini kes Covid-19 di Malaysia sehingga semalam	
Jumlah	
Kes baharu	2,195
Import:	10
Tempatan:	2,185
Pulih	1,427
Kematian	8
Masih dirawat	19,854
Jumlah kes sembuh	353,822
Jumlah Kematian	1,378
Jumlah kes keseluruhan	375,054

36.9 peratus dengan Selangor kekal mencatat angka tertinggi iaitu 2,356,484 pendaftaran.

Fasa pertama pemberian vaksin yang bermula Februari lalu melibatkan 500,000 anggota barisan hadapan termasuk petugas kesihatan.

Sementara itu, bagi fasa kedua yang dijangka bermula bulan ini hingga Ogos tahun ini pula mem-



SEORANG Jururawat menyuntik vaksin Covid-19 kepada salah seorang penerima di Pusat Perubatan Universiti Malaya, Lembah Pantai, Kuala Lumpur baru-baru ini.

babitkan 9.4 juta warga emas, kumpulan rentan dan Orang Kelainan Upaya.

Bagi fasa ketiga pula, dijadualkan akan bermula pada bulan Mei hingga Februari tahun ha-

dapan melibatkan penerima berumur 18 tahun ke atas dengan sasaran kira-kira 14 juta orang.

Saringan remaja lelaki cetus satu lagi kluster sekolah

PUTRAJAYA – Hasil saringan bergejala ke atas seorang remaja lelaki berusia 17 tahun pada 9 April lalu mencetuskan satu lagi kluster sekolah atau institusi pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan (KPM) yang dikesan di Tatau dan Bintulu, Sarawak.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, kluster tersebut iaitu Kluster Jalan Bintulu Sibu telah menjangkiti 11 orang selepas saringan dijalankan terhadap 546 individu sehingga semalam.

"Kluster tersebut antara lima kluster baharu yang dikenal pasti sekali gus menjadi penyumbang kepada kes harian negara yang kekal merekodkan angka 2,195 kes, menjadikan jumlah kes positif Covid-19 mencecah 375,054 kes.

"Angka kes aktif dengan kebolehhajngkitan pula mencatatkan sebanyak 19,854 kes, manakala sebanyak 1,427 kes sembuh direkodkan dan jumlah kumulatif kes sembuh sepenuhnya daripada Covid-19



NOOR HISHAM

sebanyak 353,822 kes," katanya dalam satu kenyataan semalam.

Tambah Noor Hisham, Sarawak melaporkan kes tertinggi sebanyak 508 kes dengan 372 kes daripada kluster-kluster dan saringan kontak rapat yang aktif dijalankan di lapangan, diikuti oleh Selangor sebanyak (431 kes) dan Johor (387 kes).

Menurutnya, lima kluster baharu yang dilaporkan mem-

babitkan tiga kluster tempat kerja dan masing-masing satu kluster komuniti dan kluster sekolah atau institusi pendidikan (KPM).

"Kluster lain yang dilaporkan ialah Kluster Jalan Perindustrian Satu di Muar, Johor dengan 254 kes hasil saringan bersasar pekerja-pekerja beberapa kilang yang tinggal di Jalan Perindustrian 1, Batu 8, Kawasan Perindustrian Bukit Bakri, Muar.

"Selain itu, Kluster Selat Klang di Klang dan Petaling, Selangor dengan 25 kes iaitu kes indeks lelaki berusia 41 tahun serta melibatkan pekerja-pekerja sebuah syarikat di Jalan Pelabuhan Utara, Pelabuhan "Klang, Selangor," ujarnya.

Dalam pada itu, Noor Hisham berkata, lapan kematian dilaporkan di Sarawak, Sabah, Kelantan, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur dan Pulau Pinang melibatkan enam lelaki dan dua wanita berusia antara 37 hingga 90 tahun menjadikan sebanyak 1,378 kes kematian Covid-19.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
 MUKA SURAT : 5
 RUANGAN : NEGARA

Pusat pendidikan di tujuh daerah di Kelantan ditutup ekoran kes meningkat **464 kes positif babitkan sekolah**

Oleh MUHAMMAD AYMAN GHAFFA

KOTA BHARU – Sebanyak 464 kes jangkitan Covid-19 dikesan berlaku dalam kalangan warga sekolah termasuk pelajar, guru dan kakitangan pendidikan di semua daerah di Kelantan.

Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Kelantan, Datuk Dr. Zaini Hussin berkata, jumlah itu merangkumi 30 peratus daripada keseluruhan kes yang dilaporkan di negeri ini dalam tempoh 14 hari.

Menurutnya, daripada jumlah kes di semua sekolah, 56 peratus jangkitan berlaku di sekolah menengah, manakala 44 peratus lagi di sekolah rendah.

"Berdasarkan data, 256 kes Covid-19 dilaporkan berlaku di sekolah menengah, manakala 111 kes di sekolah rendah dan lapan kes di Taman Bimbingan Kanak-Kanak (Tabika).

"Selain itu, kita dapati seramai 86 orang guru dan kakitangan sekolah dikesan dijangkiti wabak Covid-19," katanya ketika dihubungi *Kosmo!* semalam.

Menurut Zaini, bilangan warga sekolah yang dikesan positif Co-



PASUKAN keselamatan mengawal ketat pintu masuk Sekolah Menengah Ugama (SMU) (Arab) Tarblah Diniah Tahfiz Bunut Sarang, Tumpat ekoran penutupan sekolah terbabit semalam.

vid-19 mengikut daerah pula mendapati, Kota Bharu mencatatkan jumlah yang paling ramai iaitu 189 kes diikuti dengan Tumpat sebanyak 113 kes.

Katanya, Tanah Merah pula

mencatatkan sebanyak 55 kes, Pasir Mas (36 kes), Machang (20 kes), Bachok (17 kes), Pasir Puteh (15 kes), Kuala Krai (8 kes), Jeli (7) dan Gua Musang (4).

Terdahulu, penutupan se-

kolah di tujuh daerah di Kelantan kecuali Gua Musang, Jeli dan Kuala Krai terpaksa dilaksanakan ekoran 30 peratus jangkitan Covid-19 terdiri dalam kalangan warga sekolah.

Menteri Besar Kelantan, Datuk Ahmad Yakob berkata, beberapa langkah diambil bagi mengatasi penularan kes di tempat kerja, sekolah, masjid dan komuniti.

Beliau berkata, Kelantan mencatatkan kadar kebolehjangkitan paling tinggi di negara ini dengan 1.32 berbanding kadar kebangsaan iaitu 1.19.

Sementara itu, Pengarah Jabatan Pendidikan Kelantan, Zulkernai Fauzi mengumumkan penutupan sekolah-sekolah terbabit melalui satu surat rasmi dan diterima pihak pentadbiran sekolah-sekolah terbabit pada pukul 5 pagi semalam.

Menurut surat itu, Zulkernai berkata, arahan penutupan sekolah di tujuh daerah itu dijalankan selepas menerima cadangan oleh Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Khas Negeri Kelantan yang bermesyuarat kelmarin.

"KPM membuat ketetapan semua sekolah dalam daerah PKP diarah tutup bagi tempoh tujuh hari mulai 18 hingga 24 April 2021.

"Semua murid yang tinggal di asrama perlu kekal berada di asrama," katanya.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 10

RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT

Lagi kluster sekolah di Sarawak

Melibatkan pelajar dan kakitangan pusat pendidikan di Jalan Bintulu Sib

Oleh RAJA NUR FAZNE AIDA

SHAH ALAM

Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) mengesan satu lagi kluster sekolah atau institusi pendidikan tinggi yang melibatkan kes di Sarawak.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, ia termasuk dalam lima kluster baru yang dikenal pasti pada Ahad dengan tiga daripadanya melibatkan

kluster tempat kerja dan satu kluster komuniti.

"Kluster sekolah atau institusi pendidikan tinggi KPM (Kementerian Pendidikan) itu ialah Kluster Jalan Bintulu, Sib

yang melibatkan daerah Tatau dan Bintulu di Sarawak. "Kluster ini melibatkan pelajar dan kakitangan sebuah pusat pendidikan yang terletak di Jalan Bintulu Sib, Tatau. Sehingga hari ini (Ahad), sejumlah 546 individu disaring dengan 11 kes dikesan positif Covid-19 dalam kluster ini," katanya dalam satu kenyataan pada Ahad.

Pada Sabtu, KKM mengesan tiga sekolah atau institusi pendidikan tinggi iaitu Kluster Ulu Balingian (Sarawak), Jalan Disa (Sarawak) dan Jalan Mak-



DR NOOR HISHAM

tab (Selangor).

Selain itu, katanya, tiga lagi kluster melibatkan tempat kerja iaitu Kluster Selat Klang dan Tapak Bina Cahaya Alam di Selangor serta Jalan Perindustrian Satu di Johor.

Sementara itu, sebanyak 2,195 kes positif baharu Covid-19 dan lapan kematian direkodkan pada Ahad.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, 1,427 kes sembuh turut dicatatkan menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes pulih Covid-19 di negara ini sebanyak 353,822 daripada keseluruhan 375,054 kes manakala keseluruhan angka kematian mencecah 1,378 orang selain jumlah aktif kini ialah 19,854.

"Daripada jumlah kes baharu hari ini (Ahad), 2,185 merupakan penularan kes tempatan manakala 10 lagi adalah kes import," kata beliau lagi.

Mengulas lanjut katanya, sebanyak 219 kes sedang dirawat di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) dengan 90 individu memerlukan

kes alat bantuan pernafasan.

Beliau turut memaklumkan, Sarawak kembali mencatatkan kes harian tertinggi iaitu 508 kes diikuti Selangor (431) dan Johor (387).

"Kelantan (332), Kuala Lumpur (176), Sabah (112), Pulau Pinang (84), Negeri Sembilan (42), Perak (35), Kedah (30), Terengganu (16), Melaka dan Pahang masing-masing 15 kes.

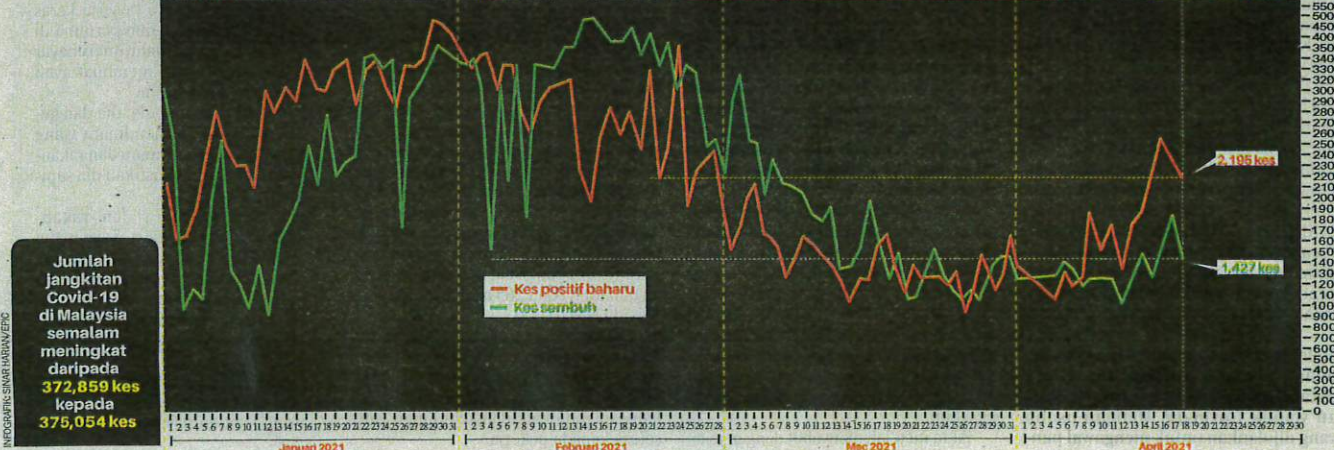
"Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan mencatatkan enam kes manakala Putrajaya serta Perlis masing-masing mencatatkan tiga kes," katanya.

Beliau berkata, secara keseluruhannya sebanyak 1,182 kluster diisytiharkan telah pun tamat setakat ini termasuk 14 kluster pada Ahad.

SITUASI TERKINI KES COVID-19 DI MALAYSIA



JUMLAH KES BAHARU DAN SEMBUH DILAPORKAN SETIAP HARI					
JUMLAH KESELURUHAN	PULIH	ICU	KEMATIAN	KES BAHARU	SUDAH DIPAKSI
375,054	353,822	219	1,378	+2,195	1,135,015



Jumlah jangkitan Covid-19 di Malaysia semalam meningkat daripada 372,859 kes kepada 375,054 kes

INFOGRAFIK SINAR HARI/BERNAMA/STC

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

IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME

PHASE 2 STARTS WITH 10,000 SENIORS

Around 9,916 individuals aged 75 and above with co-morbidities have been given appointments, says health minister

THARANYA ARUMUGAM
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ALMOST 10,000 senior citizens aged above 75 with chronic conditions will receive the Covid-19 vaccine today.

They are part of the nation's second phase of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP), which would also begin today.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba said 2,698,134 individuals had registered for the vaccination under phase two of the programme, which prioritised the elderly, those with morbidity problems and persons with disabilities (PwD).

"There are an estimated 9,916 individuals aged 75 and above with co-morbidities (who have been given) appointments (and) called to be vaccinated on the first day of the second phase of the NIP," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Phase two would run from this month to August this year, where the government aimed to inoculate 9.4 million senior citizens aged 60 and above, as well as vulnerable groups with morbidity problems and PwD.

Dr Adham, who co-chaired the Special Committee on Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee (JKJAV), said the government had designated 30 vaccination centres in 10 states to carry out the programme.

The 10 states were Kedah (five vaccination centres), Pahang (five), Penang (five), Sabah (four), Terengganu (three), Melaka (three), Negri Sembilan (two), and one each in Perlis, Sarawak, and Labuan, he said.

He said up to Saturday, 8,946,750 people (36.9 per cent) had signed up for the NIP, with Selangor recording the highest number of registrations at 2,356,484.

He noted that 439,286 individuals had received both doses of

the vaccine in the first phase of the NIP.

Phase one of the programme began in February, which aimed to inoculate 500,000 frontliners.

Dr Adham said in the same period, 695,729 individuals had received the first dose, bringing the total number of doses of Covid-19 vaccines administered in the country to 1,135,015.

Meanwhile, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rina Mohd Harun said a total of 36,000 senior citizens and PwD registered under the Welfare Department were expected to get their jabs under phase two of the NIP.

They comprised 25,000 senior citizens and 11,000 from the PwD community, she added.

"We will also intensify efforts to register the target groups for vaccination through various programmes because some of them lack the knowledge to register," she told Bernama after a Selangor Wanita Perikatan Nasional (PN) programme in Klang yesterday.

Rina, who is Wanita PN chief, said the ministry was actively helping to get the target groups to sign up for vaccination but they needed to register via the MySejahtera application.

On March 29, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said those who had registered under the NIP's third phase would also be given priority to receive the vaccine in phase two.

This would only be done if there was sufficient supply of vaccines and in the event that phase two registrations were slower than expected.

However, Khairy, clarified that senior citizens, those with co-morbidities and PwDs would still be prioritised under phase two.

The third phase of the NIP would involve adults aged 18 and above and was scheduled to run from May to February next year, targeting around 14 million people.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

Infectivity rate hits new high on Saturday

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Covid-19 infectivity rate, or R naught (RO), rose to 1.19 on Saturday, the highest rate recorded so far compared with the previous high of 1.18 recorded the day before.

On Jan 16, the RO was 1.17.

According to data shared by Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah on Facebook yesterday, the ascending trend had continued since the middle of last month, when it was at 0.81, before rising above 1.0 earlier this month.

He said the RO rate was consistent with the increasing daily Covid-19 infections, which had now breached the 2,000 mark since Thursday, although new cases had registered a drop of up to three figures on March 29.

The data also showed that the surge in cases was faster than anticipated by the Health Ministry (MoH), which had projected daily cases to jump to more than 2,000 by mid-May in the event the RO reaches 1.2.

Apart from that, six states recorded a higher RO than the national average on Saturday, with Kelantan recording the highest at 1.32. This was followed by Kuala Lumpur (1.27), Sarawak (1.23), Terengganu (1.21), Sabah (1.21) and Negri Sembilan (1.20).

The number of weekly Covid-19 cases also jumped to its highest

level in six weeks when the total number of cases stood at 13,726 this week.

The last time the weekly number of cases recorded such a figure was at the beginning of last month, with 13,462 cases at the beginning of March.

With the increase in the number of cases, 68 districts nationwide have been re-designated as red zones. Of the 68, 46 are in the Peninsular.

The readings were based on a 14-day movement data on the distribution of cases by districts between April 4 and Saturday.

Only 17 green zone districts were recorded free from Covid-19 cases on Saturday, seven of them in the peninsula, apart from the 50 yellow zone districts and 24 orange zones being recorded nationwide.

Several states also showed a deteriorating Covid-19 situation over the past 14 days, including Terengganu, Kelantan, Perak, Johor, Pahang, Kedah and Sarawak.

The daily Covid-19 cases are on the rise again and had recorded more than 2,000 cases for three consecutive days since Thursday. Up to noon yesterday, the number of infections was at 2,195 cases, a slight reduction from Saturday's 2,331. On Friday, 2,551 cases were registered, while on Thursday, 2,148 cases were

recorded.

Of the new cases recorded, 2,185 were local infections involving 1,837 Malaysians and 348 foreigners. The country also saw 10 imported infections involving two Malaysians and eight foreigners.

The new figures raised the cumulative cases nationwide to 375,053, with 19,854 active cases.

Dr Noor Hisham said Sarawak recorded the highest number of cases at 508, followed by Selangor (431) and Johor (387). Kelantan, meanwhile, logged 332 cases, followed by Kuala Lumpur (176) and Kota Kinabalu (112).

Only Perlis, Putrajaya and Labuan reported single-digit infections yesterday. Both Perlis and Putrajaya recorded three cases each, and Labuan six.

Eight more people died, increasing the death toll to 1,378.

Up to noon yesterday, five new clusters were detected in three states, including one education cluster.

Dr Noor Hisham said the clusters were detected in Selangor (Selat Klang and Tapak Bina Cahaya Alam clusters), Johor (Jalan Perindustrian Satu cluster), and Sarawak (Tarat Tani and Jalan Bintulu Sibul clusters). The five new clusters raised the tally to 1,520. Of the total, 338 were still active, while 1,182 clusters have ended, including 14 yesterday.

'Vaccination reduces severity of symptoms'

KUALA LUMPUR: The current Covid-19 vaccine implementation for the public is aimed at reducing the risk of severe symptoms of individuals afflicted by the coronavirus.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin explained that vaccine recipients could still be infected with Covid-19, but at a much lower rate and with reduced serious symptoms.

The National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme coordinating minister said the vaccination was essential in reducing the death rate due to the pandemic while ensuring the public health system capacity was not overburdened.

"The main purpose of the Covid-19 vaccine is to reduce severe symptoms, protect us from death, (reduce the dependency on) ICU (Intensive Care Unit), ventilator etc. Thus reducing the burden on the public health sys-



Health workers collecting swab samples in Kuala Terengganu on Wednesday. Concern has grown after 40 Health Ministry personnel were reportedly infected with the Covid-19 virus after receiving both doses of their vaccination. PIC BY GHAZALI KORI



Khairy Jamaluddin

tem. "Infections can occur but the rate is much lower. But the symptoms are not serious.

Take the vaccine," he urged via a Twitter posting.

He was commenting on public concerns following reports that 40 Health Ministry personnel were infected with the coronavirus even after completing the two doses of immunisation.

Health director-general Tan Sri

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah was quoted as saying that nine vaccine recipients had been infected two weeks after the second dose, while another 31 individuals were infected less than two weeks after receiving their second jab.

Dr Noor Hisham said data showed that public health measures, including compliance with standard operating procedures, were needed because vaccine recipients could still be infected with less serious symptoms.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : NATION

Covid-19: Current situation		New cases		Total cases		Total deaths		Total recovered																							
(As at 7pm April 18, 2021)		Malaysia		2,195		375,054		1,378(+8)		353,822(+1,427)																					
Perlis	+3	Kedah	+30	Penang	+84	Perak	+35	Selangor	+431	Kelantan	+332	Terengganu	+16	Pahang	+15	N. Sembilan	+42	Melaka	+15	Johor	+387	Sabah	+112	Sarawak	+508	FT K. Lumpur	+176	FT Putrajaya	+3	FT Labuan	+6
Asean+	Indonesia	Philippines	Japan	Myanmar	S. Korea	China	Singapore	Thailand	Cambodia	Vietnam	Brunei	Laos																			
Confirmed cases	1,604,348	936,133	525,218	142,619	114,115	90,499	60,831	42,352	6,389	2,781	221	58																			
Deaths	43,424	15,960	9,584	3,206	1,797	4,636	30	101	43	35	3	0																			
Recovered	1,455,065	779,084	478,378	131,889	104,006	85,549	60,463	28,750	2,476	2,475	206	49																			
Global Top 10	US	India	Brazil	France	Russia	UK	Turkey	Italy	Spain	Germany																					
Confirmed cases	32,361,280	14,788,109	13,900,134	5,260,182	4,702,101	4,385,938	4,212,645	3,857,443	3,407,283	3,137,907																					
Deaths	580,756	177,168	371,889	100,593	105,582	127,260	35,608	116,676	76,981	80,526																					
Recovered	24,909,770	12,809,643	12,344,861	4,081,014	4,326,780	4,145,810	3,643,734	3,235,459	3,129,234	2,775,200																					

Rising above the challenges

With infections increasing, the focus is back on intense testing

By ASHLEY TANG
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PETALING JAYA: With Covid-19 infections on the uptick again, the focus is back on the number of tests being carried out in the country.

Based on Health Ministry statistics, Malaysia conducted an average of 44,253 RT-PCR and RTK-Ag tests a day from March 4 to April 16.

The RTK-Ag tests, however, do not include those conducted by the Social Security Organisation (Socso).

These two tests – reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) and antigen rapid test kit (RTK-Ag) – are the two known popular Covid-19 tests available and used by health authorities worldwide to detect the virus.

In RT-PCR testing data released by the ministry, it was revealed that the maximum testing capacity for such tests is at 80,755 with an estimated 35,061 tests conducted on April 16.

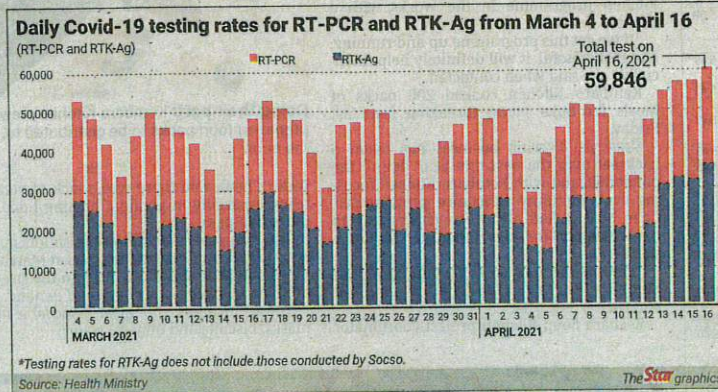
It also showed that testing was underutilised at university labs (0.3%) and private labs (24%), but was at overcapacity in public hospital labs (112%) and at the national public health laboratory (109%).

Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood, the Prime Minister's Special Adviser on Public Health, said essentially testing had two approaches: one targeted at the outbreak and clusters, and the other was wider surveillance.

For the former, the country was testing enough based on the recommendations by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which said that the positivity rate needs to be less than 5% and testing must be between 10 and 30 times the number of cases reported.

"So, if we stick to the international criteria, we are testing enough. Can we increase testing? Of course.

"Are we able to contact trace everyone? This is always a challenge and can be quickly overwhelmed when numbers rise," Dr Jemilah said



when contacted yesterday. Despite this, she pointed out that more tests should be done widely for increased surveillance to be conducted beyond regular close contacts testing.

"We need to step up on surveillance which means you just go out and test widely. This is good public health practice for pandemics. In some countries, citizens even do home testing.

"Testing should be expanded so that we find, test, trace, isolate and support," she said. The country's cumulative positive rate stands at 4.37% as at Saturday.

Health experts appeared lukewarm over the testing data revealed by the ministry.

Universiti Malaya epidemiologist Prof Datuk Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud called for more detailed testing data to be released.

"For example, the private sector tests are being done on whom? Workplaces, clusters or voluntary screening?"

"What is the positivity rate like for both RT-PCR and RTK-Ag tests? Were there double tests done like both RT-PCR and RTK-Ag for the same patient?"

"Do the dates for samples correspond to the date of results?" he asked.

Independent health policies specialist Dr Khor Swee Kheng said that it was impossible to draw meaningful conclusions from what he felt was incomplete and inadequate data.

"The calls for more transparency are not new,

and have been consistently and repeatedly voiced by academics, health experts, the media, think tanks and citizens for more than one year," he said.

Dr Khor wanted to know why there was "gross under-utilisation" of the overall testing capacity in Malaysia and why testing remains so dependent on the ministry despite the talk about public-private partnership and partnership with public university labs.

He said this in reference to the data on the testing capacity in the ministry's related facilities, compared to the university labs as well as private sector labs.

"There is another datapoint that should be more readily available, the genomic surveillance of new variants. The ministry must provide this data publicly, instead of continuing to be paternalistic about the data," he said.

Universiti Malaya virologist Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar believed that the low testing rates in the university labs was due to the lack of funding.

He noted that it was also difficult to tell if sufficient testing was being done in the country as not much was known on who and when the ministry decides to test.

"As such, it is likely that the daily cases being reported is merely a reflection of the testing limit. It is a possibility that if more tests are done, perhaps more cases will be detected," he said.

Highest infectivity rate recorded in Kelantan

KOTA BARU: Kelantan recorded the highest Covid-19 infectivity rate in the country at an R-nought of 1.32 compared with the national rate of 1.19.

Mentri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yakob said this was following a drastic surge of Covid-19 cases, forcing the implementation of the movement control order in seven districts in the state from April 16-29.

To date, he said the results of tests on 2,627 samples had yet to be obtained, and even more worrying-ly was the use of beds at hospitals and Covid-19 Quarantine and Low Risk Treatment Centres was increasing.

"A total of 23% of the cases did not involve close contact and this indicates that the infection in the community is very high.

"Schools in the MCO areas have been ordered to close as 30% of the infections involve staff at these schools.

"As such, several measures will be taken to overcome the proliferation of Covid-19 at places of work, schools, mosques and communities," he said in a statement yesterday.

Ahmad said the state government also urged Muslims in the state to hold the solat hajat (prayer of need) in mosques and at home during the MCO.

He also asked Muslims to read the Quran more frequently and to give alms during the period.

"Hopefully, the pandemic can be curbed by practising taqarrub (acts which bring Muslims closer to Allah) and the blessings of Ramadan," he said.

On Saturday, Kelantan recorded 225 new cases with 28 active clusters. It registered 332 infections yesterday. — Bernama

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 9

RUANGAN : NATION

'We are still in the process'

Health DG: Saliva tests would add to current sampling procedures

By FATIMAH ZAINAL
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PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry is still in the process of adding deep throat saliva sampling as another way to test for Covid-19.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said testing would remain the same and that the use of deep throat saliva would only add to the ministry's current sampling procedures.

"We are still in the process. It adds to our sampling procedures.

"Testing is the same, the only difference is in the sampling procedure," said Dr Noor Hisham when contacted yesterday.

In February, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba said that the ministry would start the deep throat saliva sampling method soon at its hospitals before extending it to other health facilities.

Currently, the ministry is using nose and throat swabs to detect Covid-19 cases.

Dr Noor Hisham said among the challenges of the deep throat saliva sampling method was that it must be obtained correctly.

"You need to be trained to get the deep throat saliva, otherwise it may be inaccurate.

"If you give sublingual saliva, it is not accurate," he said.

"The challenge is to get people to do it right strictly following the protocol. This will require a campaign."

Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar

The sublingual saliva gland is located in the floor of the mouth.

On March 4, Dr Noor Hisham said that seven hospitals were conducting field assessments on the deep throat saliva sampling method for Covid-19 testing.

The new method could be a welcome alternative for those uncomfortable with the current nasal swab tests where samples are taken by inserting a swab into the upper reaches of the nasal passage or to the back of the throat.

The Institute for Medical Research (IMR) had also conducted a study comparing nasopharyngeal swabs (NPS) and early morning saliva in identifying Covid-19.

Overall, its findings demonstrated that saliva was a better alternative for the detection of Covid-19.

The IMR tests were conducted on 217 asymptomatic adult males in a Covid-19 quarantine centre who had tested positive for the virus between eight and 10 days prior to the testing.

A total of 160 out of the 217 participants tested positive for Covid-19 based on saliva, NPS or both testing methods.

But the detection rate for Covid-19 was higher with saliva compared to NPS, testing 93.1% or 149 out of 160, compared to 52.5% or 84 out of 160 for NPS.

"Taking into consideration the simplicity of specimen collection, shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the transmissibility of the virus, saliva could enable self-collection for an accurate Covid-19 surveillance testing," it concluded.

Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia president Dr Raj Kumar Maharajah said while it could be easier, the challenges were in ensuring that the samples of deep throat saliva were properly collected.

"Saliva has to be from the throat and not just the mouth and preferably not mixed with phlegm or other particles from the oral cavity.

"Spillage and handling is another

concern as we do not want people in the office or house where samples are self-collected, to spill and contaminate other surfaces and infect others," he said.

He said if one was not trained, the sample could be contaminated, leading to possibly false results.

Other contaminants that could interfere with results include the use of decongestant nasal sprays, steroid nasal sprays, throat lozenges, blood, toothpaste and mouthwash, added Dr Raj Kumar.

Smokers might also have dry mouths and this might reduce their ability to produce adequate saliva while alcohol could denature the viral ribonucleic acid (RNA) so it could not be amplified and detected in the test, he explained.

"Saliva tests can be done as a screening tool as with the ever-evolving pandemic, people may not have the resources to do the invasive method in the long term," he added.

Universiti Malaya virologist Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said the use of saliva as a testing specimen was mooted a while back, adding that studies had proved its reliability and practicality.

"The challenge is to get people to do it right strictly following the protocol.

"This will require a campaign," he said.