

**AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN**  
**MUKA SURAT : 8**  
**RUANGAN : NASIONAL**

Penularan COVID-19

# Buat RT-PCR jika masih bergejala

**Varian Omicron berkemungkinan tidak boleh dikesan dengan RTK antigen**

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**Kuala Lumpur:** Individu yang mendapati diri mereka negatif berdasarkan saringan kit ujian pantas (RTK) antigen tetapi masih bergejala, dinasihatkan menjalani ujian diagnostik Polimerase-Transkripsi Terbalik (RT-PCR) bagi membendung penularan Omicron.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata langkah itu wajar diambil khususnya bagi mereka yang mengalami gejala dan berkelebihan untuk dijangkiti kerana terdedah kepada individu positif.

Beliau berkata, pendekatan itu selaras garis panduan kesihatan yang dikeluaran Pentadbiran Ubat-Ubatan dan Makanan (FDA) Amerika Syarikat (AS) berhubung perkembangan situasi penularan Omicron, Selasa lalu.

"Penemuan terbaru berdasar-

kan sampel pesakit menunjukkan RTK antigen masih berupaya mengesan varian Omicron dengan sensitiviti yang berkuran-

"Sebelum itu, mereka menguji RTK antigen dengan virus hidup yang dinyahaktifkan menerusi proses pemanasan untuk menunjukkan kemampuan mengesan Omicron seperti varian yang lain.

"Mereka (FDA) masih terus menjalankan penilaian terhadap RTK antigen menggunakan sampel pesakit. Justeru, adalah penting untuk kita semua mengambil suntikan vaksin dan dos penggalak.

"Asingkan diri jika bergejala dan lakukan saringan kendiri secara berkala menggunakan RTK antigen, selain elak berada di tempat sesak atau tempat tertutup," katanya kepada BH.

FDA AS menerusi kenyataan kelmarin dilaporkan berkata, kit ujian pantas COVID-19 di rumah berkemungkinan memberikan keputusan negatif palsu terhadap varian Omicron, susulan tahap sensitiviti peranti berkenaan yang dikatakan berkurangan.

Sementara itu, Dr Noor His ham menerusi kenyataan di Twitter berkata, penularan COVID-19 menerusi varian Omicron secara cepat dan keganasan varian Delta boleh mencetuskan tsunami pandemik.

Beliau berkata, situasi itu ba-

kai berlaku jika semua pihak tidak mengambil langkah pencegahan dan kawalan awal, memandangkan varian membangkitkan (VOC) itu kini semakin meningkat di pelbagai negara.

Pakar virologi dari Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Prof Madya Dr Yahya Mat Arip, berkata RTK antigen yang berada di pasaran ketika ini perlu menjalani proses pembaharuan supaya mengambil kira ciri mutasi pada Omicron.

Katanya, ini kerana bahagian kertas serapan pada RTK yang mengandungi antibodi untuk mengesan antigen daripada sampel air liur berkemungkinan tidak memberikan tindak balas sebaiknya terhadap varian Omicron.

"Pelbagai RTK antigen yang dijual di pasaran sekarang mengandungi antibodi yang dilettakkan pada kertas serapan, berpadukan ciri varian Delta memandangkan ia paling dominan sebelum ini."

"Susulan mutasi yang banyak berlaku pada Omicron, berkelebihan sensitiviti RTK antigen ini berkurangan dan dikuatir bakal memberikan keputusan ujian negatif palsu.

"Justeru, jalan terbaik ialah ulang ujian saringan menggunakan RT-PCR jika mempunyai gejala atau sudah berdepan risiko kerana terdedah kepada individu positif," katanya.

rang-kurang satu dos vaksin itu.

**Kuala Lumpur:** Jumlah kes baru COVID-19 semalam, mencairkan peningkatan kepada 3,997 kes berbanding 3,683 kes, kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, data terbaru itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes di Malaysia mencecah 2,754,513 kes setakat ini.

Sementara itu, seramai 22,851,542 individu atau 97.6 peratus populasi dewasa di negara ini sudah lengkap vaksinasi COVID-19, setakat jam 11.59 malam kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) dalam laman COVIDNOW, seramai 23,146,049 individu dewasa (98.9 peratus) pula menerima sekutu-

rang-kurang satu dos vaksin itu.

Bagi populasi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun, seramai 2,752,103 individu (87.4 peratus) juga lengkap vaksinasi, manakala 2,844,678 (90.3 peratus) menerima sekurang-kurang satu dos vaksin COVID-19.

Sementara itu, statistik harian menunjukkan sejumlah 185,321 dos vaksin diberikan, kelmarin membabitkan 3,364 dos pertama, dos lengkap (4,900) dan dos penggalak (177,057).

Perkembangan itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif pemberian vaksin melalui Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) kini meningkat kepada 57,305,127 dos, termasuk 5,908,852 dos penggalak.

## Rakyat digesa waspada

**Kuala Lumpur:** Kerajaan berusaha memperlakukannya gelombang penularan jangkitan COVID-19 menerusi varian Omicron bagi mengelak pelaksanaan langkah kawalan sekatan secara drastik.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, ketika menegaskan perkara itu berkata, penularan varian membangkitkan (VOC) yang berasal dari Afrika Selatan itu sememangnya tidak dapat dielakkan.

Sehubungan itu, beliau menasihatkan orang ramai untuk mengambil langkah berwaspada, termasuk dengan melakukan saringan secara berkala khususnya jika ingin mengadakan pertemuan dengan ahli keluarga lain.

"Saya amat sarankan saringan secara berkala jika anda ingin berjumpa dengan sanak-saudara.

"Omicron tidak dapat dielak-

kan. Saya ingin cuba memperlahankan gelombang (Omicron) yang bakal tiba, dengan sebaik mungkin.

"Ini supaya kita tidak perlu mengambil keputusan melaksanakan langkah dristik yang bakal menjekasakan ekonomi," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM), Sabtu lalu memaklumkan, sebanyak 62 kes COVID-19 varian Omicron dikecualian di Malaysia, dengan 61 kes adalah jangkitan import dari luar negera, manakala satu kes lagi masih dalam siasatan yang disahkan jangkitan tempatan.

Mengikut taburan data negeri-pula, Omicron dilaporkan di Perak, Sarawak dan Negeri Sem-

bilan, semalam.

Menjelang ambang tahun baru, Khairy turut menasihatkan orang ramai yang ingin menyertai aktiviti sosial untuk mengamalkan langkah berkaitan bagi mengurangkan risiko jangkitan COVID-19.

"Lima saranan ingin diberikan KKM ialah lakukan ujian kendiri sebelum berkumpul, elak dari pada menyertai aktiviti jika tidak sihat serta buka tingkap dan pintu untuk pengudaraan yang baik.

"Turut digalakkan ialah mengadakan aktiviti di luar rumah dan sentiasa pakai pelitup muka serta hanya tanggalkan ketika waktunya makan atau minum," katanya.



Khairy Jamaluddin



Antara penduduk yang hadir mendapatkan suntikan dos penggalak sempena Program Outreach Pemberian Vaksin di Sekolah Agama Rakyat Al-Saadah Penaga, Kepala Batas, semalam.  
(Foto Danial Saad/BH)

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 11

RUANGAN : COVID-19

## 5,908,852 dos penggalak disuntik

**Kuala Lumpur:** Sebanyak 22,851,542 individu atau 97.6 peratus populasi dewasa di negara ini lengkap menerima suntikan vaksin Covid-19, kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) melalui laman Covidnow, 23,146,049 individu atau 98.9 peratus daripada golongan itu menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun pun, sejumlah 87.4 peratus atau 2,752,103 melengkapkan vaksinasi manakala 2,844,678 atau 90.3 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin Covid-19.

Sementara itu, statistik harian menunjukkan sejumah 185,321 dos vaksin di-



PETUGAS Klinik Perubatan The Pearl, George Town, Priya Kumaresan menunjukkan vaksin Sinovac yang menjadi antara jenis dos penggalak yang akan diberi kepada penerima. - Gambar NSTP/MIKAIL ONG

berikan kelmarin membabitkan 3,364 dos pertama, 4,900 dos lengkap dan 177,057 dos penggalak.

Perkembangan itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif pemberian vaksin menerusi

Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) meningkat kepada 57,305,127 dos dengan 5,908,852 daripadanya adalah dos penggalak. - Bernama

## Thailand beri amaran peningkatan kes Omicron

**Bangkok:** Pihak berkuasa Kesihatan Awam Thailand memberi amaran peningkatan kes Covid-19 selepas mengklasifikasi kluster Omicron pertama negara itu di wilayah timur laut Kalasin sebagai *super-spreader event*.

Kluster cepat merebak itu dikaitkan dengan sepasang suami dan isteri Thai, kedua-duanya berusia 47 tahun yang pulang dari Belgium dan memasuki negara itu melalui program tanpa kuarantin *Test & Go*. Pasangan itu berkunjung ke bar, konser dan pasar.

Terkini, Thailand melaporkan 740 kes varian Omicron di 33 wilayah di negara itu termasuk lebih 200 kes

daripada kluster Kalasin.

Ketua Pengarah Jabatan Sains Perubatan Dr Supakit Sirilak berkata, kes Omicron melibatkan 489 kes import dan 251 jangkitan tempatan.

"Sehingga kini, kami menjalankan 8,000 ujian Covid-19 dan mengesan 740 kes Omicron," katanya, kelmarin.

Sementara itu, setiausaha tetap Kementerian kesihatan awam Dr Kiatiphum Wongrajit berkata, dalam situasi paling buruk, dengan langkah pencegahan seperti ujian dan vaksinasi yang sedikit, kes Covid-19 harian dalam negara boleh mencapai 30,000 kes dan lebih 170 kematian.

Bagaimanapun, menuрутnya kes Covid-19 boleh mencecah 10,000 dengan kematian harian yang lebih sedikit jika orang ramai mematuhi langkah pencegahan penularan Covid-19.

Jurucakap Pusat Pentadbiran Situasi Covid-19 (CCSA) Dr Taweesin Visanuyothin berkata, kakitangan kerajaan akan mula bekerja dari rumah selepas Tahun Baharu dalam usaha membendung wabak itu.

Beliau turut menggesa sektor swasta untuk mengikut langkah itu.

Dalam tempoh 24 jam terakhir, Thailand mencatatkan 2,575 kes baru Covid-19 dan 17 kematian, menjadikan jumlah jangkitan keseluruhan negara itu kepada 2,217,287.

## Wajib pakai semula pelitup muka

*Kerajaan Arab Saudi turut kuat kuasa penjarakan sosial di semua tempat susulan kenaikan kes*

**Kuala Lumpur**

**K**erajaan Arab Saudi mewajibkan semua pemakaian pelitup muka dan penjarakan fizikal di semua tempat tertutup dan terbuka bermula Khamis.

Agensi Berita Saudi (SPA) yang memetik sumber Kementerian Dalam Negeri (Mol) Saudi melaporkan keputusan itu dibuat selepas kes harian dijangkitan Covid-19 di ne-

gara itu kembali melonjak.

Sehingga kelmarin, Arab Saudi mencepatkan 602 kes jangkitan baharu, 147 kes sembuh dan satu kematian.

Pada Ok-

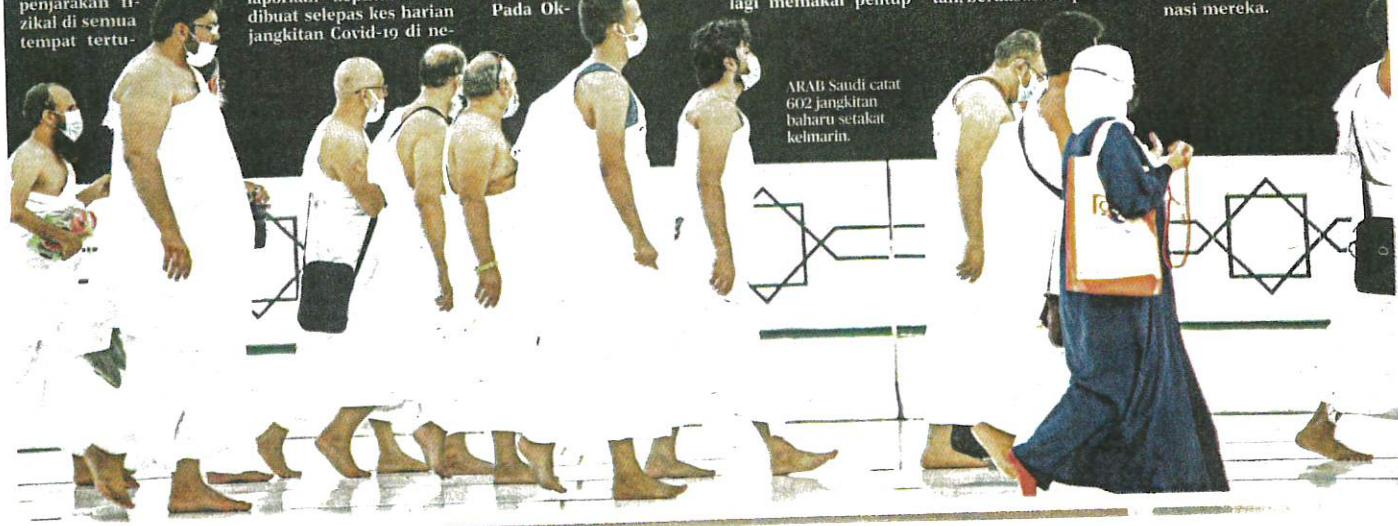
tober lalu, Arab Saudi mengumumkan beberapa kelonggaran prosedur operasi standard (SOP) Covid-19 antaranya individu yang sudah divaksin sepenuhnya tidak perlu lagi memakai pelitup

muka di tempat awam terbuka.

Mol menjelaskan semua prosedur dan arahan semasa tertakluk kepada penilaian berterusan oleh pihak berkuasa kesihatan, berdasarkan perkem-

bangunan situasi epidemiologi tempatan dan global.

Mol turut mengulangi gesaan supaya orang ramai mematuhi langkah berjaga-jaga dan segera melengkapkan dos vaksinasi mereka.



AKHBAR : KOSMO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NEGARA

# 'KKM, MOTAC bakal tentu status umrah'

Oleh NORLIDA AKMAR IDROS

**SIK** – Keputusan untuk menangguhkan ibadah umrah akan dibuat berdasarkan penilaian risiko penularan kes positif Covid-19 varian Omicron di Arab Saudi dan dalam kalangan jemaah tempatan oleh Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM).

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Hal Ehwal Agama), Idris Ahmad berkata, sebarang perkembangan berhubung situasi semasa penularan varian tersebut akan dimaklumkan oleh KKM.

"Umrah ini terletak di bawah Kementerian Pelancongan, Seni dan Budaya (MOTAC), walau bagaimanapun kita akan sama-sama berbincang dengan MOTAC dan KKM dari semasa ke semasa.

"Kita akan lihat bagaimana perkembangan (penularan Omicron) sama ada keadaan itu se-

rius atau tidak," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang akbar selepas menghadiri Majlis Perjumpaan bersama Tuan-Tuan Guru Pondok Negeri Kedah di Madrasah Ar Rahmaiah, Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Salleh, di sini semalam.

Seramai 40 tuan guru sekolah pondok di negeri ini hadir dalam majlis perjumpaan tersebut.

Pada majlis itu, Idris menyampaikan sumbangan YAYASAN TAQWA Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (MAIWP) berjumlah RM290,000 kepada Pertubuhan Hal Ehwal Sekolah Agama (HESA) Kedah dan badan bukan kerajaan (NGO) Islam di negeri ini.

Sementara itu, dalam perkembangan berkaitan, Idris menasihatkan jemaah supaya menjaga prosedur operasi standard (SOP) semasa mengerjakan umrah dan berdoa kepada Allah supaya dihindari daripada pe-

nyakit tersebut.

"Bagi jemaah yang baru pulang, kalau boleh dapat melakukan ujian saringan Covid-19 setiap hari dan kekal berada di rumah sepanjang tempoh kuarantin kendiri," ujarnya.

Tambahnya, orang ramai pada masa sama juga diminta untuk tidak mengunjungi jemaah yang baru pulang daripada mengerjakan ibadah umrah bagi mengekalkan jangkitan.

Kosmo/ kelmarin melaporkan kerajaan mungkin akan menangguhkan ibadah umrah ke Mekah jika situasi penularan varian Omicron di Arab Saudi meningkat dan jangkitan dalam kalangan jemaah dalam tempatan berada pada tahap membimbangkan.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar berkata, ia belum sampai tahap menangguhkan ibadah umrah itu lagi dan kerajaan tidak mahu membuat keputusan terburu-buru.



IDRIS (dua dari kanan) menyampaikan sumbangan kepada Pengurus Majlis Guru Pondok Pertubuhan HESA Kedah, Tuan Guru Abdullah Lebal Samah di Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Salleh, Sik semalam.

**AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN**  
**MUKA SURAT : 10**  
**RUANGAN : KELUARGA PRIHATIN**



Dr Noor Azmi (tengah) melakukan tinjauan di Klinik Kesihatan Batu 14 bagi melawat penduduk dan petugas kesihatan di sekitar Hulu Langat pada Khamis.

### KKM segerakan pembaikan KK terjejas banjir

**HULU LANGAT** - Kerja-kerja pembaikan klinik kesihatan (KK) dan fasiliti kesihatan yang terjejas akibat banjir kini sedang digerakkan, kata Timbalan Menteri Kesihatan, Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali.

Beliau berkata, keutamaan Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) adalah memastikan perkhidmatan kesihatan di kawasan terjejas dapat bersambung semula secepat mungkin.

"Memang banyak klinik kesihatan dan fasiliti kesihatan di bawah KKM yang terjejas dan ditutup akibat banjir. Kita belum mendapat anggaran kerugian, tetapi kita telah bergerak memper-

baiki kemudahan yang rosak agar klinik dapat dibuka segera untuk pesakit mendapat kemudahan perubatan dengan cepat," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian kepada pemberita ketika meninjau tiga klinik kesihatan yang terjejas akibat banjir di kawasan Hulu Langat di sini pada Khamis iaitu KK Hulu Langat Batu 14, Klinik Desa Dusun Tua dan Klinik Desa Batu 18.

Sebelum ini, KK Hulu Langat ditutup seminggu dan kini telah dibuka semula untuk menerima pesakit, manakala dua lagi klinik masih ditutup untuk kerja-kerja pembaikan dan dijangka dibuka minggu depan. - *Bermama*

**AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA**  
**MUKA SURAT : 3**  
**RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI**

# Umrah: Kerajaan teliti perkembangan Arab Saudi

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**SIK:** Keputusan menangguhkan ibadah umrah dalam kalangan umat Islam di negara ini ber-gantung kepada penelitian risiko penularan varian Omicron di Arab Saudi dan perbin-cangan dengan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) dan Kemen-tarian Pelancongan, Seni dan Budaya (Motac).

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Hal Ehwal Agama), Idris Ahmad berkata, apa juga tindakan yang akan diambil kerajaan adalah bagi menjamin keselamatan umat Islam dari negara ini yang mahu menuaikan umrah susulan peningkatan kes penularan varian tersebut dalam kalangan jemaah umrah sejak kebelaga-kangan ini.

"Kita akan dapat petunjuk (varian Omicron) daripada KKM nanti. Umrah ini terletak di bawah Motac bukan bawah bahagian hal ehwal agama, jadi

saya akan berbincang dengan Motac dengan KKM," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian selepas majlis perjumpaan bersama Tuan Guru Pondok Negeri Kedah di Madrasah Ar Rahma-nah, Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Salleh di sini semalam yang dihadiri seramai 40 guru pondok di negeri ini.

Langkah itu diambil susulan tindakan Arab Saudi melaksanakan semula beberapa sekatan Covid-19 termasuk memakai pelitup muka dan penjarakan sosial selepas 6.5 juta kes direkodkan dalam tempoh satu minggu di seluruh dunia, yang merupakan kes mingguan tertinggi sejak wa-bak itu bermula dua tahun lalu.

Orang ramai yang berada di Arab Saudi digesa mematuhi protokol baharu bagi mengelak daripada berdepan hukuman undang-undang kerana gagal mematuhi langkah tersebut.

Di Emiri-riah Arab

Bersatu (UAE), jumlah kes harian baru mele过asi 2,000 ba-ru-baru ini, buat kali pertama sejak Jun lalu.

Selasa lalu, Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin memberitahu, kerajaan mungkin menangguhkan ibadah umrah jika situasi penularan varian Omicron di Arab Saudi meningkat dan jangkitan dalam

kalangan jemaah tempatan berada pada tahap membimbangkan.

Bagaimanapun, Khairy berkata, pada masa ini belum lagi sampai tahap menangguh ibadah umrah dan kerajaan tidak mahu membuat keputusan terburu-buru.

Dalam pada itu, Idris meng-harapkan kerjasama daripada jemaah yang baru pulang menunaikan umrah mematuhi tempoh kuarantin kendiri bagi mengelak penularan Cov-id-19.

"Kita harap jemaah umrah yang balik dapat melakukan ujian saringan Covid-19 setiap hari dan tidak perlu keluar ru-mah supaya tidak berlaku jangkitan."

"Orang ramai pada masa sama juga diminta untuk tidak mengunjungi jemaah yang baru pulang daripada menger-jakan umrah bagi mengelak jangkitan," ujarnya.

IDRIS AHMAD



## Wajibkan sukarelawan buat saringan

**PETALING JAYA:** Semua petu-gas dan sukarelawan yang melaksanakan misi bantuan banjir perlu lengkap vaksinasi, diwajibkan mendaftar dengan Kementerian Kesihatan dan membuat saringan Covid-19 sebelum dibenarkan ke lokasi.

Pakar Perubatan Kesihatan Awam, Datuk Dr. Zainal Ariffin Omar berkata, langkah tersebut penting bagi memudahkan kawalan sekiranya berlaku pe-nularan dan mengelakkan ke-munculan kluster baharu.

"Di samping itu, pihak berkuasa juga perlu mem-berikan tempoh tertentu dan menetapkan lokasi sebelum membenarkan kerja-kerja su-karelawan.

"Ia bukan sahaja dapat

mengelakkan pertindahan antara NGO lain, tetapi dapat mengelakkan jangkitan dalam komuniti," katanya kepada *Utusan Malaysia* semalam.

Tambah Dr. Zainal Ariffin berkata, petugas sukarelawan juga perlu membuat ujian kendirinya sebaik selesaI melaksanakan kerja di lapangan.

"Daripada pemerhatian kami di lapangan, memang rā-ram yang tidak ikut prosedur operasi standard (SOP). Risiko jangkitan tinggi," ujarnya.

Dalam pada itu, Presiden Per-satuan Hospital Swasta Malaysia (APHM), Datuk Dr. Kulji Singh berkata, pemantauan daripada kakitangan Kementerian Kesihatan terhadap petugas misi bantuan banjir dapat membantu

mengurangkan risiko penularan kluster pasca banjir.

"Namun, apabila yang dibim-bangi, jumlah kakitangan tidak mencukupi untuk melaksana-kan tugas-tugas lain."

"Pada saya pematuhan SOP sangat penting dan NGO perlu bertanggungjawab pastikan semua sukarelawan ikut garis panduan," jelasnya.

Kes Covid-19 mencatatkan peningkatan sejak kelmarin melebihi parus tiga ribu selama dua hari berturut-turut dengan 3,997 kes dicatatkan semalam.

Kebimbangan itu diluahkan Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Noor Hisham Abdullah semalam dengan penularan varian Omicron yang cepat dan keganasan varian Delta boleh

mencetuskan tsunami pandemik jika tiada pencegahan awal.

Peningkatan itu menjadikan kes kumulatif kini berjumlah 2,754,513 sejak wabak itu melanda negara tahun lalu.

Menerusi hantaran di akaun Facebook semalam, beliau mengingatkan orang ramai supaya mendapatkan vaksin, dos penggalak, mengasingkan diri sekiranya bergejala dan menjalankan ujian menggunakan ujian pantas (RTK) antigen secara kendirinya serta mengelakkan perkumpulan ramai.

Malah, katanya, penularan varian Omicron dan Delta boleh mencetuskan 'tsunami pandemik' jika tidak mengambil langkah-langkah pencega-han dan kawalan lebih awal.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NEWS / STORY OF THE DAY

## PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

# KHAIRY: HEED S.O.P, STAY SAFE

Public urged to get their booster shot, observe new norms amid New Year celebrations

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**T**HE Health Ministry has reminded the public to continue observing the new norms and adhere to Covid-19 standard-operating procedures (SOP) amid the coming

New Year celebrations.

Across all media platforms, the ministry uploaded a previous video of Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin urging the public to practise the SOP and conduct self-tests before meeting relatives and friends.

"It's been a tough year for us, but things seem to be looking a little better, even with Omicron."

"So, I urge the people during the year end, I know you have plans with friends and I am not saying that you should cancel (the plans). But, stay at home if you can."

"But if you really need to spend time with them, stay safe and take your boosters (shot), perform a Covid-19 self-detection

test using RTK-Antigen before visiting relatives, neighbours or friends.

"If symptoms occur, seek treatment and stay home," he said.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah also reminded people to get vaccinated and self-isolate if they showed symptoms and to conduct periodic self-testing as well as avoid crowded and confined spaces.

"Please take all necessary precautionary and social measures to prevent getting infected. Stay strong and stay safe," he said.

Meanwhile, daily Covid-19 cases continued to rise for the second consecutive day yesterday, with 3,997 new infections reported.

On Wednesday, Malaysia registered 3,683 new cases after recording below the 3,000-mark for daily cases for three days.

Dr Noor Hisham said the new infections brought the national tally to 2,754,513 since the start of the pandemic last year.

Meanwhile, 36 Covid-19 deaths were reported on Wednesday, raising the cumulative death toll to 31,428. The Health Ministry's CovidNow portal reported of the new fatalities on Wednesday, two were brought-in-dead cases.

Selangor had the highest number of new fatalities at 12, followed by Kuala Lumpur (five), Kelantan and Perak four each, Kedah, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang (three each) and Tereng-

ganu (2). No fatalities were reported in Perlis, Penang, Melaka, Johor, Sabah, Sarawak, Labuan and Putrajaya.

For the past two weeks, Malaysia recorded 16 new cases for every 10,000 people and reported 11 deaths for every million people. Of the active cases (based on Wednesday's data), 34,781 are undergoing home quarantine, and 3,065 are at low-risk quarantine and treatment centres.

A total of 3,548 patients are hospitalised and 288 admitted to the Intensive Care Units, with 162 under ventilators.

The country has fully vaccinated 97.6 per cent of its adult population and 87.4 per cent of adolescents, as of Wednesday.

## Expert: Booster dose crucial to avoid catastrophic impact

**KUALA LUMPUR:** It is a race against time as the authorities are pushing to secure better protection for people against the new Covid-19 variant, Omicron, with health experts describing the decision to cut the dosage gap for booster shots as "vital".

Universiti Putra Malaysia's epidemiologist Associate Professor Dr Malina Osman said this preventive step was crucial to avoid another round of a potential "catastrophic impact" to the country's healthcare system.

She said the booster dose was to increase individual protection and to avoid another massive Covid-19 wave due to Omicron.

"As we are racing against time, all individuals who deserve to get vaccinated should come forward without delay."

"Omicron is transmitted much faster compared with Delta. By getting booster doses as soon as possible, it will prevent possible transmission among susceptible groups."

"The public should not perceive the importance of vaccination at their individual level, but view this as a collective effort to protect the community and country, particularly the healthcare system."

Dr Malina said among the challenges for the booster shot programme was the resistance from the public and rapid change in policy on vaccinations.

She said the requirement to get a third dose to maintain the fully vaccinated status must be applied to other groups, not just to

those aged 60 and above and Sinovac recipients.

"The current situation due to the presence of Omicron leads to an inevitable requirement for the redefinition."

"At the same time, the mandate for the 'fully vaccinated' status based on this redefinition should be regulated according to the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 or Act 342 as well," she added.

Former Malaysian Medical Association president Datuk Dr N.K.S. Tharmaseelan said the trimming of the time interval between the normal vaccination and booster dose would likely give better protection and arm the public against the virus.

"There is no clear evidence yet that trimming the booster dose interval is advantageous as scientific evidence can be conclusive only after data studies over long periods."

"However, time, in this pandemic, is not an advantage or luxury that we have on our side."

"Logically, this move would give better protection against the virus."

"Before long, Omicron, too, will mutate and we may see more new variants," he said.

Dr Tharmaseelan said the government must make full use of private clinics spread while roping in health-related non-governmental organisations to cover the entire population in the shortest possible time.

He said the people must realise that this was the best available



A medical frontliner administering a Covid-19 booster shot at a vaccination centre in Seberang Jaya on Wednesday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

situation for the moment and urged the authorities to provide better awareness and education on the importance of getting the booster shot.

He suggested that offering incentives, such as extra holidays or vouchers, could encourage more people to get the shot.

"When the 'carrots don't work, employees can be compelled to have the vaccination and booster shots as a condition for continued employment as they may pose a health threat to others."

Health expert Professor Dr G. Jayakumar said as evidence had emerged that vaccine effectiveness against Covid-19

decreased with time, the efficacy of current Covid-19 vaccines against Omicron was still uncertain.

He said the booster dose was highly recommended, especially for the vulnerable population, to offer more durable protection against the virus.

"Other countries are looking at cutting down the booster interval period," said the Melaka Manipal University College Malaysia's Community and Occupational Medicine academic.

Dr Jayakumar said the government should engage with the 8,000 general practitioners in the country, who are at the forefront

in providing primary healthcare services, as they could play a major role in the administration of booster shots.

"Mega vaccination centres can complement, though the challenge of maintaining physical distancing is a concern when there is a large crowd."

"The government should incentivise employers via tax deductions to enable them to immunise their staff."

He said a major concern in vaccination efforts was misinformation on social media, stressing that the spread of unverified and fake news against vaccination must be curtailed.

AKHBAR : THE STAR  
MUKA SURAT : 6  
RUANGAN : NATION

## Almost 23 million adults fully vaccinated

PETALING JAYA: A total of 22,851,542 individuals or 97.6% of the adult population in the country have completed their Covid-19 vaccination as of Wednesday.

Based on the Health Ministry's CovidNow portal, 23,146,049 individuals or 98.9% of the adult population have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

For the adolescent population, 87.4% or 2,752,103 individuals of those aged between 12 and 17 have completed the vaccination and 2,844,678 or 90.3% have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

A total of 185,321 doses of the vaccine were dispensed on Wednesday, with 3,364 as first dose, 4,900 as second dose and 177,057 as booster dose, bringing the total number of vaccine doses administered under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme to 57,305,127, including 5,908,852 booster doses.

## 15 flood evacuees in relief centres test positive

PETALING JAYA: Another 15 Covid-19 cases were detected among flood victims in temporary relief centres (PPS), says Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

The Health director-general said the total number of cases among flood victims now stood at 442, adding that there were no new clusters detected in PPS yesterday.

"Of the total, 71 cases involved infectious diseases comprising acute respiratory infections (26 cases), skin disease (30), acute gastroenteritis (13) and hand, foot and mouth disease (two)," he said in a statement.

Dr Noor Hisham said there were three new clusters, bringing the total number of active clusters nationwide to 221.

"The daily Covid-19 infections increased to 3,997 cases, taking the cumulative total to 2,754,513."

"From the new cases, 64 are in Categories Three, Four and Five while the rest are in Categories One and Two with no or mild symptoms."

"A total of 3,631 are local infections while the remaining 366 are imported cases," he said.

There were 281 cases in the intensive care unit with 155 of them needing respiratory aid.

There were 3,984 recoveries, taking the cumulative number to 2,681,390.

The country's infectivity rate was at 0.95.

**AKHBAR : THE STAR**  
**MUKA SURAT : 10**  
**RUANGAN : NATION**

## Overwhelming crowds at PPVs for booster jab

By ALLISON LAI  
allison@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** Crowds at several vaccination centres (PPV) in the Klang Valley violated the SOP for physical distancing, as many tried to take advantage of the walk-in process for the Covid-19 booster shot.

Social media platforms were abuzz since yesterday morning with updates and questions on which PPV was crowded or whether a certain make of vaccine was still available for walk-in.

"Almost all the big PPVs were overwhelmed."

"I spent four hours at One City in Puchong after detouring from Subang Parade due to the super-long queue there," said Facebook user Sharon Seow.

Pictures and videos of long lines at Paradigm Mall were also shared as people queued on the second floor, where the PPV was at, since the mall was opened.

"Waited for more than three hours, not yet my turn. The queue hardly moved," said Yen Leng.

Irene Lee, who arrived at 10am, said she still had not gotten the registration form after waiting for hours.

Similarly, Derrick Low said he hoped there was a better system to



**Waiting in line:** A long queue of people who turned up to get their booster shot at the PPV in Paradigm Mall in Petaling Jaya. — CHAN TAK KONG/The Star

distinguish between walk-in, those with an appointment and senior citizens.

Long queues were also reported at the iHeal Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur and Subang Parade PPV.

For Izam Jalil, it was a letdown when he learnt in the middle of queuing up that the AstraZeneca vaccine had run out at the iHeal Medical Centre.

"After I confirmed with the staff there, I decided to come earlier the next day," said Izam.

Clinic nurse Nathaniel Ly said the recent announcement on the shortened gap for the booster shot among

AstraZeneca recipients had sparked widespread interest.

"Also, some PPV stated that they only have the AstraZeneca vaccine until Dec 31, hence more people are rushing for it," he said, adding that people should not be choosy about the booster shot.

When contacted, Paradigm Mall's management said it was aware of the boisterous crowd and had taken immediate steps to mitigate the situation.

"We created a designated waiting area for those who were in line and chairs were also provided for them.

"We also sent personnel on the

ground to remind the crowd to maintain physical distancing while queuing," it said, adding that it would continue to monitor the situation in the coming days.

It said the vaccination hosted at its premises was conducted by Pusat Perubatan Naluri and the Health Ministry, which were offering both Comirnaty (by Pfizer) and AstraZeneca boosters.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai said it was "worrying" to see the crowds.

"No doubt, the booster shot is important, but the SOP needs to be in place at all PPV," he said.

"Otherwise, those going for the jab for increased protection against Covid-19 might end up getting infected instead."

"It needs to be taken seriously as we are now faced with a more transmissible Covid-19 variant."

He said for those who had the first two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, Comirnaty is the recommended booster, along with AstraZeneca as an alternative.

"As such, there is no need to expose yourself by joining the long queues at these centres."

"Just go to the appointed PPV as given to you by MySejahtera or call up your neighbourhood GPs to see if you can have your booster there," he added.

## Clinics damaged by floods being repaired

**HULU LANGAT:** Repairs on health clinics and health facilities affected by the floods are being expedited, says Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali.

He said the ministry's priority was to ensure healthcare in the affected areas could resume as soon as possible.

"Many health clinics and health facilities under the MOH were affected and closed due to the floods."

"We have not received an estimate of the damage, but we have moved to repair them," he told reporters when inspecting three health clinics affected by the floods in the Hulu Langat area yesterday.

They are the Hulu Langat Batu 14 health clinic, Klinik Desa Dusun Tua and Klinik Desa Batu 18, reported Bernama.

The Hulu Langat health clinic was closed for a week and has now reopened, while the two other clinics are still closed for repairs and are expected to reopen by next week.

Dr Noor Azmi also said the ministry was ready to deal with water-borne infectious diseases such as leptospirosis and skin diseases that usually occurred during the flood season.

**AKHBAR : THE SUN ON FRIDAY****MUKA SURAT : 2****RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS**

## Health Ministry expediting repair works on clinics

**HULU LANGAT:** Repair works on health clinics and health facilities affected by the recent floods are being expedited, said Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali.

He said the ministry's priority is to ensure that health services in affected areas can resume as soon as possible.

"It is true that many health clinics and health facilities under the ministry were affected and closed due to the floods. We have not received an estimate on the loss, but have started to repair damaged facilities so that clinics can be reopened as soon as possible," he told reporters when inspecting three

health clinics affected by floods in Hulu Langat yesterday.

They are Hulu Langat Batu 14 health clinic, Klinik Desa Dusun Tua and Klinik Desa Batu 18.

The Hulu Langat health clinic was closed for a week and has now been reopened, while the other two clinics are still closed for repair works. They

are expected to reopen by next week.

Noor Azmi said the Health Ministry is ready to deal with water-borne infectious diseases such as leptospirosis and skin diseases that usually occur during floods.

"We have provided health facilities in affected areas, with the required medication." - Bernama