

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 1
RUANGAN : MUKA HADAPAN

Kes kritikal COVID-19 berisiko naik semula

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Kuala Lumpur: Pakar virologi memberi amaran kes COVID-19 khususnya kategori 3, 4 dan 5 berisiko meningkat semula jika masyarakat lalai dalam mematuhi prosedur operasi standard (SOP) dan sikap segelintir yang menyembunyikan keputusan ujian dilakukan sendiri menggunakan kit ujian sendiri (RTK).

Ini susulan pergerakan bebas orang ramai selepas kerajaan menarik semula sekatan pergerakan rentas negeri sejak 11 Oktober lalu, disamping penyusutan tahap keberkesanan vaksin.

Pakar virologi dari Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Prof Madya Dr Yahya Mat Arip, berkata kebenaran untuk bergerak bebas dan rentas negeri menyaksikan ramai yang sebelum ini tidak dapat pulang ke kampung mengambil keputusan untuk menziarah ibu bapa mereka dan bergerak bebas.

Dr Yahya bimbang, jika jumlah pesakit yang mengalami gejala teruk khususnya kategori 3, 4 dan 5 melonjak secara mendadak, dikhuatiri negara akan kembali kepada keadaan sebelum ini apabila sektor perkhidmatan kesihatan hampir lumpuh.

Nasional 3

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Teliti kaedah daftar dos penggalak

Langkah elak pembaziran vaksin jika penerima gagal hadir janji temu

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Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) diminta meneliti semula kaedah pendaftaran senarai menunggu bagi pengambaran dos penggalak vaksin COVID-19 berikutan ketidakseimbangan terhadap aspek pengurusan logistik dan kehadiran janji temu.

Pakar perubatan mencadangkan pendekatan terbaik yang sepatutnya diterapkan adalah mengutamakan golongan rentan menerusi konsep 'opt in' atau kehadiran sukarela seperti dilak-

sanakan ketika pemberian pelan AstraZeneca sebelum ini.

Presiden Persatuan Pakar Perubatan Kesihatan Awam Malaysia (PPPKAM), Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar, berkata kerajaan khususnya KKM tidak boleh beranggapan bahawa penerimaan dalam kalangan masyarakat terhadap suntikan dos penggalak dan dos asas mengikut Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) adalah sama.

Ini kerana, katanya, perangakan terkini menunjukkan kadar ketidakhadiran janji temu dos penggalak bagi kelompok penerima pertama, iaitu petugas barisan hadapan dan golongan rentan atau mempunyai komorbiditi menjangkau 40 peratus yang disifatkan amat tinggi dan tidak memberi contoh baik kepada kelompok penerima lain.

"Malah, kempen serta penerangan KKM berhubung pemberian dos penggalak juga tidak meyakinkan. Jika kita mengambil pendekatan menggunakan sena-

rai menunggu untuk mengantikan individu tidak hadir janji temu dos penggalak, ia dikhua-tiri bakal mencetuskan beberapa masalah.

"Antaranya berhubung pengurusan logistik, terutama membabitkan aspek suhu penyimpanan vaksin Pfizer yang amat sensitif. Jika tidak dititikberatkan, perkara ini berupaya mengundang kepada pembaziran bekalan serta menjejaskan kualiti bahan pelalian.

"Faktor kehadiran pengganti juga tidak boleh diambil ringan kerana jika dihubungi dan perlu datang dalam tempoh singkat, kemungkinan mereka enggan kerana terikat dengan jadual kerja," katanya kepada BH, semalam.

Pendaftaran bagi kaedah datang terus sekiranya ada pembatalan janji temu atau 'no show'

(gagal hadir) oleh penerima dos penggalak, akan dilaksanakan bagi lima kategori individu.

Ia merangkumi individu layak pemberian dos penggalak; ingin mendapatkan suntikan lebih awal sebelum janji temu; belum menerima suntikan dos pertama atau kedua vaksin COVID-19; terlepas janji temu dan remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun yang belum melengkapkan imunisasi.



Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar

Pakar virologi dari Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Prof Mahyudha Dr Yahya Mat Arip juga mencadangkan supaya strategi 'opt in' atau sukarela dalam pengambaran dos penggalak dikuatkuasakan supaya ia merangsang keyakinan orang ramai.

"Cuba kita lihat balik apa terdapat ketika konsep 'opt in' vaksin AstraZeneca dulu? Pada mulanya

orang bimbang nak ambil kerana faktor kesan sampingan, tapi disebabkan 'laris' dalam tempoh singkat, akhirnya ia dimasukkan semula ke dalam PICK dan pengambilannya juga tidak berdepan sebarang masalah.

"Maka, pendekatan sama boleh dibuat berkaitan dos penggalak, tetapi demi memberi keutamaan kepada golongan rentan yang mempunyai komorbiditi, asyinkan sejumlah bekalan untuk mereka. Pembahagian boleh pada 60-40 peratus, iaitu 60 peratus untuk penerima yang diberi keutamaan, selebihnya diagihkan menerusi 'opt in'," katanya.

Presiden Persatuan Hospital Swasta Malaysia (APHM), Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh, berkata pihaknya mempunyai kepakaran dan kapasiti mencukupi untuk mengendalikan pemberian dos penggalak, namun perincian kaedah pendaftaran senarai menunggu untuk datang terus ke PPV bagi mendapatkan pelalian itu belum dimaklumkan KKM.

Gagal patuhi SOP punca jangkitan meningkat

Dari Muka 1

"Kelalaian pematuan SOP berlaku kerana masyarakat ketika ini berada dalam zon selesa kerana menganggap kadar liputan vaksin amat meluas cukup untuk memberi perlindungan. Sebenarnya ia boleh menjadi penyumbang utama peningkatan kes apabila masyarakat mulai leka.

"Ramai yang disuntik vaksin Sinovac dan Pfizer tanpa disedari sudah berdepan penyusutan tahap perlindungan daripada COVID-19 selepas beberapa bulan.

"Mereka yang mempunyai komorbiditi pula lebih mudah dijangkiti dan amat berisiko mengalami gejala kesihatan yang teruk apabila dijangkiti virus ini.

"Bukan kata vaksin sebelum ini tidak berkesan, tetapi penurunan kadar perlindungan memang berlaku dan ia disahkan menerusi kajian di peringkat antarabangsa," katanya.

Oleh itu, beliau menggesa orang ramai untuk segera mengambil dos penggalak seperti disuruh Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM).

Dr Yahya berkata, lebih merisaukan sekarang adalah kesan musim tengkujuh mulai bulan depan.

"Ini kerana musim tengkujuh berupaya menambah risiko jangkitan, maka mereka yang berada di kawasan berisiko perlu ambil langkah berjaga-jaga apabila terpaksa dipindahkan ke lokasi penempatan sementara," katanya.

Fasa 1 Program Imunisasi CO-

VID-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) menggunakan vaksin Pfizer membabitkan petugas barisan hadapan bermula Februari lalu, diikuti Fasa 2 menggunakan vaksin Pfizer dan Sinovac dari April hingga Ogos, manakala Fasa 3 Mei hingga bulan depan yang turut membabitkan penggunaan vaksin AstraZeneca.

Kajian 'The Real World Evaluation of COVID-19 Vaccination' (RECoVAM) menunjukkan pengurangan keberkesanan ketiga-tiga vaksin digunakan dalam PICK selepas enam bulan individu lengkap dua dos suntikan.

Kajian Universiti Oxford pula mendapati keberkesanan mencegah jangkitan COVID-19 merosot masing-masing menjadi 75 peratus dan 61 peratus selepas 90 hari suntikan kedua vaksin Pfizer atau AstraZeneca.

Keberkesanan Sinovac dikatakan boleh berkurangan daripada 76 peratus kepada 27 peratus selepas 3 bulan pengambilan dos kedua.

Justeru, Kementerian Kesihatan menggalakkan pengambilan dos penggalak selepas tiga bulan dos kedua untuk penerima vaksin Sinovac dan enam bulan bagi yang disuntik Pfizer untuk meningkatkan semula kadar keberkesannya.

Kelmarin, Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata KKM meningkatkan kesiapsiagaan menghadapi kemungkinan berlaku lonjakan kes COVID-19, termasuk menjalankan simulasi berikutan kenaikan kadar kebolehan jangkitan (Rt) yang kembali

melempi nilai 1.0 sejak 11 November lalu.

Pakar virologi dari Universiti Malaya (UM), Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar, pula berkata risiko peningkatan kes dan penularan gelombang baharu COVID-19 menjelang akhir tahun ini boleh dijangka.

Beliau berkata, peningkatan kadar kemasukan pesakit kategori 3, 4 dan 5 akan menjadi petunjuk fasa gelombang baharu jangkitan COVID-19 melanda.

"Sekarang ujian sendiri digunakan secara meluas, tetapi ada yang mengambil sikap untuk 'tutup mulut' apabila keputusan menggunakan sampel air liur mereka didapati positif.

"Mereka tidak lapor menerusi MySejahtera, tetapi hanya akan tampil ke hospital apabila mengalami gejala kesihatan, iaitu kesukaran bernafas yang teruk.

"Isu keputusan negatif palsu menggunakan kit ujian sendiri juga menyumbang kepada peningkatan kes kerana keberkesanan cara pengendalian sampel yang tidak betul.

"Tanpa disedari, mereka sebenarnya positif jangkitan COVID-19 dan lebih parah apabila tidak mengalami sebarang gejala dan menjalani kehidupan seharian seperti biasa," katanya.

Kes positif harian COVID-19 sehingga jam 12 tengah hari semalam merekodkan lonjakan 16.1 peratus kepada 6,288 kes, berbanding 5,413 kes kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata peningkatan itu menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan angka

Tren peningkatan kemasukan ke hospital

	Diwadkan Purata 7 hari	Kadar penggunaan katil	Tren 7 hari	Lengkap vaksinasi
Malaysia	1,250	68%	+7%	76.2%
Kuala Lumpur	43	49%	+87%	91.5%
Melaka	36	83%	+80%	75.2%
Negeri Sembilan	71	76%	+39%	81.1%
Kedah	45	81%	+18%	69.7%
Perak	67	52%	+18%	71.7%
Lembah Klang	335	62%	+17%	91.5%
Putrajaya	21	48%	+17%	91.5%
Johor	193	75%	+11%	78.1%
Selangor	271	83%	+80%	75.2%
Terengganu	69	92%	+5%	67.8%
Sabah	116	60%	+3%	59.0%
Perlis	12	68%	+0%	77.9%
Pulau Pinang	24	56%	-4%	83.6%
Kelantan	103	86%	-6%	59.5%
Pahang	40	68%	-17%	68.1%
Sarawak	137	67%	-17%	74.1%

Sumber: COVIDNOW

jangkitan virus berkenaan sebanyak 2,563,153 kes.

Sementara itu, data COVID-NOW yang dikeluarkan KKM menunjukkan kadar penggunaan katil di hospital bagi pesakit COVID-19 menunjukkan trend peningkatan sebanyak tujuh peratus dalam tempoh tujuh hari lalu, menjadi 68 peratus.

Kemasukan ke Unit Rawatan Rapi (ICU) pula mencatatkan 63.1 peratus setakat tengah malam

kelmarin, dengan Selangor mencatatkan 82.8 peratus, Putrajaya (80 peratus) dan Kuala Lumpur (79.6 peratus).

Penggunaan alat bantuan pernafasan negara adalah 38.9 peratus, namun lima negeri menunjukkan penggunaan lebih 50 peratus, iaitu Pahang dengan 51.7 peratus; Sarawak 51.2 peratus; Kelantan dan Perak masing-masing 50.7 peratus dan Terengganu 50 peratus.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Kadar Rt meningkat tidak jejakkan PPN

Peningkatan kes hanya babitkan pesakit kategori 1, 2 dan 3

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Kuala Lumpur: Peningkatan kadar kebolehan jangkitan (Rt) COVID-19 kebelakangan ini tidak akan menjejaskan Pelan Pemulihan Negara (PPN).

Pengerusi Majlis Pemulihan Negara (MPN), Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, berkata di sebalik peningkatan itu, kebanyakan jumlah kes yang berlaku membatikan kategori 1, 2 dan 3 yang ringan kesannya, manakala kes serius kurang.

Katanya, peningkatan Rt itu juga tidak memberi kesan ketara kepada PPN memandangkan sektor ekonomi dibuka, malah ada industri yang beroperasi 24 jam sehari.

"Pada masa ini, memang ada petunjuk peningkatan R-Naught, tetapi jika kita teliti balik pecahan kes, peningkatan kes mungkin kategori 1, 2 dan 3, yang serius sangat tak begitu besar."

"Setakat ini, belum ada tanda ia membawa kesan (kepada PPN) kerana industri dan sektor ekonomi semua sudah dibuka. Kita tidak lagi menyekat mana-mana pihak nak buka 24 jam pun boleh," katanya pada sidang media selepas mengadakan perbincangan meja bulat dan Dialog Pemulihan Negara bersama Dewan Perniagaan British Malaysia (BMCC), semalam.

Perbincangan meja bulat ini diketuai oleh Pengerusi BMCC,



Muhyiddin pada sidang media selepas perbincangan meja bulat dan Dialog Pemulihan Negara bersama BMCC, semalam. (Foto Elzaiti Shamsudin/BH)

Abrar A Anwar bersama ahlinya yang juga adalah ketua industri dan wakil syarikat United Kingdom (UK) yang beroperasi di negara ini.

Dalam tempoh enam hari lalu, kadar Rt seluruh negara kembali mencecah 1.00 selepas tiga bulan had, proses pemulihannya mengambil masa kerana ada yang terjelek teruk.

Mengulas lanjut, Muhyiddin berkata, walaupun sektor industri dibenarkan beroperasi tanpa had, proses pemulihannya mengambil masa kerana ada yang terjelek teruk.

Katanya, ia menyebabkan ada sektor bergelut untuk kembali beroperasi seperti biasa dan memerlukan banyak sokongan serta bantuan dari segi kewangan, modal dan moratorium.

"MPN sentiasa beri perhatian. Ini bukan perkara mudah, belum lagi nampak kesan besar, tetapi proses pembukaan ekonomi sudah bermula," katanya.

Dalam perkembangan berkaitan, Muhyiddin yang juga bekas Perdana Menteri berkata, kehadiran ramai wakil syarikat besar

UK dalam perbincangan meja bulat membuktikan pelabur asing masih berminat untuk melabur di negara ini.

Katanya, mereka juga didapati yakin bahawa prospek ekonomi Malaysia pada masa hadapan adalah cerah.

"Hubungan dagang antara Malaysia dan UK adalah satu hubungan strategik yang penting untuk kedua-dua buah negara. Malaysia adalah rakan dagang kedua terbesar kepada UK dalam kalangan negara ASEAN."

"Sebelum pandemik pada 2019, saya dimaklumkan nilai pelaburan langsung asing (FDI) dari UK ke Malaysia adalah sebanyak 3.7 bilion pound, tetapi pada 2020, UK tiada dalam senarai 10 negara penyumbang FDI terbesar."

"Namun, saya yakin dan percaya dalam kita bergerak ke hadapan, saya melihat lebih banyak ruang dan peluang untuk syarikat dari negara seperti UK untuk masuk melabur ke Malaysia bukan sahaja dalam sektor yang sudah dipelopori, tetapi juga sektor strategik yang baharu," katanya.

Kes harian baharu naik kepada 6,288

Kuala Lumpur: Kes jangkitan baharu COVID-19 meningkat kepada 6,288 semalam berbanding 5,413 kes kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, ini menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes kini mencecah 2,563,153.

Katanya, daripada jumlah kes harian yang direkodkan itu, sebanyak 6,163 kes atau 98 peratus adalah dalam kalangan pesakit kategori satu dan dua, manakala 125 kes (2.0 peratus) adalah kategori tiga hingga lima.

Beliau berkata, kebanyakan kes yang dilaporkan itu membatikan penularan tempatan, iaitu 6,266 kes dan baki 22 kes import.

"Bilangan pesakit menerima rawatan di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) pula kini seramai 536 orang, iaitu 440 disahkan COVID-19, 96 disyaki, kemungkinan dalam dalam siasatan."

"Daripada jumlah itu, 251 individu memerlukan alat bantuan pernafasan membatikan 172 di-

sahkan COVID-19, manakala 79 disyaki, kemungkinan dalam dalam siasatan," katanya dalam kenyataan semalam.

Selain itu, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, sebanyak 4,743 kes sembuh direkodkan semalam, menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan 2,466,523 kes, iaitu 96.2 peratus daripada keseluruhan kes.

Beliau berkata, sebanyak lapan kluster baharu dikenal pasti menjadikan jumlah kluster bertambah kepada 5,858 kluster setakat ini, dengan 247 kluster masih aktif.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, lapan negeri dikesan sudah mencecah atau melebihi kadar kebolehan jangkitan COVID-19 (Rt) 1.00 iaitu Putrajaya (1.15), Negeri Sembilan (1.06), Kuala Lumpur (1.05), Selangor (1.05), Pahang (1.03), Kelantan (1.03), Kedah (1.01) serta Johor (1.00).

"Sabah (0.99), Perak (0.97), Terengganu (0.96), Pulau Pinang (0.95), Melaka (0.94) dan Sarawak (0.85). Perlis serta Labuan tiada nilai Rt direkodkan," katanya.

AstraZeneca, CoronaVac lulus sebagai dos penggalak

Putrajaya: Mesyuarat Pihak Berkuasa Kawalan Dadah (PBKD) semalam setuju memberikan kelulusan bersyarat bagi penggunaan vaksin AstraZeneca dan CoronaVac sebagai dos penggalak kepada individu berusia 18 tahun dan ke atas yang menerima vaksin siri primer daripada jenis sama.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata dos penggalak bagi vaksin AstraZeneca akan diberikan selepas masa enam bulan daripada penerimaan dos ke-

dua vaksin itu manakala bagi vaksin CoronaVac, dos penggalak akan diberikan selepas tiga hingga enam bulan daripada dos kedua diterima.

"Pemberian dos penggalak bagi kedua-dua produk vaksin ini kepada kumpulan sasaran tertentu akan diperincikan Badan Bertindak Imunisasi COVID-19



Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

Penggalak (CITF-B) dan akan dimaklumkan dari semasa ke semasa," katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Beliau berkata, mesyuarat sama turut bersetuju memberikan kelulusan pendaftaran bersyarat bagi AstraZeneca Vaccine AstraZeneca Solution for Injection untuk pengalangan ketiga, iaitu SK Bioscience Co Ltd, Ko-

rea Selatan.

Beliau berkata, pemegang pendaftaran bagi vaksin itu adalah AstraZeneca Sdn Bhd.

"PBKD sebelum ini memberikan kelulusan pendaftaran bersyarat bagi pengalangan pertama iaitu AstraZeneca Nijmegen B.V. Netherlands, manakala pengalangan kedua adalah Siam Bioscience Co Ltd, Thailand."

"Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) ingin maklumkan bahawa kelulusan pendaftaran bersyarat ini memerlukan maklumat

kualiti, keselamatan dan keberkesanan produk vaksin itu dipantau dan dinilai berdasarkan data terkini dari semasa ke semasa."

"Ia bagi memastikan perbandingan manfaat-risiko bagi vaksin itu kekal positif," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, KKM juga komited dalam mempertingkatkan akses kepada produk vaksin COVID-19 di Malaysia, dengan memastikan ia dinilai dari aspek kualiti, keselamatan dan keberkesanan oleh NPRA dan diluluskan PBKD.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 14

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Sidang Dewan Rakyat

'Tiada halangan guna kanabis untuk perubatan'

Permohonan daftar produk boleh dibuat kepada PBKD berserta bukti saintifik kukuh

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Kuala Lumpur: Akta sedia ada iaitu Akta Dadah Berbahaya 1952, Akta Racun 1952 dan Akta Jualan Dadah 1952 yang mengawal selia kanabis serta hasilnya tidak menghalang penggunaan bahan itu bagi tujuan perubatan.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata permohonan mendaftarkan keluaran menggunakan kanabis bagi tujuan perubatan boleh dikemukakan kepada Pihak Berkuasa Kawalan Dadah (PBKD) untuk dinilai dan didaftarkan mengikut Peraturan Kawalan Dadah dan Kosmetik 1984, seterusnya dipasarkan di Malaysia.

Beliau berkata, ia boleh dilakukan jika ada pihak mempunyai bukti saintifik mencukupi untuk menggunakan kanabis bagi tujuan perubatan dengan mengambil kira aspek kualiti, keselamatan dan keberkesannya.

"Ketika ini, tiada produk berasaskan kanabis untuk kegunaan rawatan perubatan manusia berdaftar di Malaysia. PBKD per-



Khairy ketika menggulung perbahasan Rang Undang-Undang Perbekalan 2022 peringkat dasar di Dewan Rakyat, semalam. (Foto BERNAMA)

nah mendaftarkan satu produk berasaskan kanabis iaitu Sativex pada 2014.

"Namun, atas permintaan pihak syarikat sendiri, pendaftaran produk ini dibatalkan pada 2017," katanya ketika menggulung perbahasan Rang Undang-Undang Perbekalan 2022 peringkat dasar di Dewan Rakyat, semalam.

Sementara itu, Khairy berkata, kerajaan bersetuju tempoh kontrak pegawai perubatan lantikan kontrak yang sudah melengkapkan khidmat wajib dilanjutkan bagi menangani isu berkenaan, pada 14 Julai lalu.

Katanya, ia bagi memastikan kesinambungan perkhidmatan dan membolehkan pegawai membuat persediaan bagi menyambung pengajian kepakaran.

"Kerajaan juga bersetuju Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) dan agensi berkaitan menyediakan

pelan komprehensif merangkumi tindakan jangka pendek, sederhana serta panjang bagi menangani isu doktor kontrak.

"Sehubungan itu, jawatankuasa khas ditubuhkan pada 20 Ogos lalu. Penyediaan pelan komprehensif ini membabitkan Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA), Kementerian Kewangan, Unit Perancang Ekonomi, Jabatan Perdana Menteri dan Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi serta KKM.

"Selain itu, jawatankuasa khas ini akan mengadakan sesi libat urus dengan pihak berkepentingan lain," katanya.

Mengenai keberkesanan talian psikososial, Khairy berkata, sebanyak 193,041 atau 79.9 peratus daripada jumlah kumulatif panggilan diterima membabitkan isu memerlukan sokongan emosi dan kaunseling, antara 25 Mac 2020 hingga 7 November lalu.

Selain itu, katanya, sebanyak

232,873 panggilan membabitkan pelbagai isu sosial seperti hilang pekerjaan, tiada sumber pendapatan dan konflik serta masalah rumah tangga diterima bagi tempoh sama.

"Bagi individu memerlukan intervensi, mereka akan dihubungkan kepada agensi berkaitan mengikut keperluan.

"Talian ini diperluaskan membabitkan kerjasama dengan agensi kerajaan lain dan pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO) yang turut memberi perkhidmatan sokongan psikososial kepada individu memerlukan," katanya.

Beliau berkata, KKM turut mengambil pelbagai inisiatif bagi memperkukuh penyampaian perkhidmatan kesihatan mental sedia ada kepada masyarakat di peringkat daerah, hospital, klinik kesihatan (KK) dan komuniti.

Katanya, ia dilaksanakan melalui strategi digariskan dalam Pelan Strategik Kesihatan Mental Kebangsaan 2020-2025, antaranya kempen kesedaran kesihatan mental 'Let's TALK Minda Sihat' merentas agensi.

"Memperluaskan perkhidmatan kaunseling di peringkat daerah dan KK serta mewujudkan pasukan kesihatan mental serta sokongan bagi memberi perkhidmatan kepada komuniti dan petugas barisan hadapan.

"Melaksanakan latihan kemahiran Bantuan Awal Psikologi (PFA) kepada pemberi khidmat kesihatan dan sukarelawan serta bekerjasama dengan NGO dengan memperkasa mereka bagi melaksanakan program promosi kesihatan mental pada peringkat akar umbi," katanya.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 15

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

'Lanjut tempoh doktor kontrak kepada 10 tahun'

Cadangan MMA mampu beri masa pengkhususan, jamin pekerjaan

Oleh Tutty Haryanti
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Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Perubatan Malaysia (MMA) mencadangkan Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA) memperuntukkan lebih banyak perjawatan serta memanjangkan tempoh doktor kontrak daripada dua tahun kepada 10 tahun.

Presiden MMA, Dr Koh Kar Chai, berkata lanjutan tempoh kontrak itu dapat menjimatkan masa membabitkan isu pentadbiran yang dihadapi setiap kali memperbaharui kontrak.

Katanya, tempoh 10 tahun itu

juga bagi membolehkan doktor kontrak memperoleh pengkhususan, selain bagi mendapatkan jaminan pekerjaan yang kini menjadi isu utama.

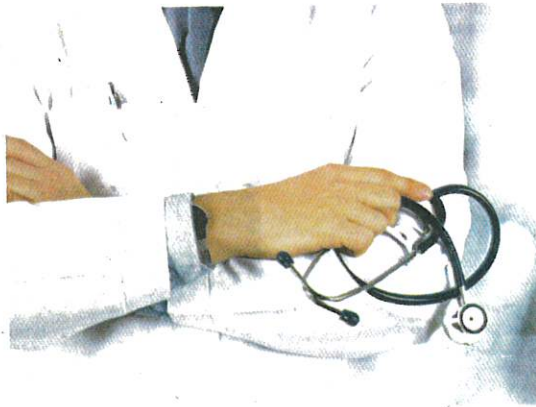
"Ramai doktor yang akan tamat kontrak menjelang akhir tahun ini dan sehingga kini, tiada maklumat yang diberikan mengenai status mereka.

"Sudah pasti ada ketakutan dan kebimbangan dalam kalangan doktor kontrak ini jika perkhidmatan mereka ditamatkan.

"Selain itu, ramai daripada doktor ini harus dibayar untuk kenaikan pangkat ke gred UD47," katanya dalam kenyataan di sini, semalam.

Selain itu, katanya, pihaknya juga meminta isu laluan pasca siswazah untuk doktor kontrak turut diberi perhatian.

"Ketika ini kumpulan doktor kontrak tidak dapat memohon program pengajian tinggi (HLP) atau mana-mana program tajaan tempatan.



Ramai doktor akan tamat kontrak menjelang akhir tahun ini. (Foto hiasan)

"Walaupun di Parlimen menyatakan doktor ini layak, tiada hitam putih daripada JPA," katanya.

Justeru, katanya, MMA men-

cadangkan doktor kontrak yang layak ini ditawarkan Hadiah Latihan Persekutuan bagi geran berasing yang akan diwujudkan.

Selain itu, katanya, doktor

Lanjutan tempoh kontrak itu dapat menjimatkan masa membabitkan isu pentadbiran yang dihadapi setiap kali memperbaharui kontrak

Koh Kar Chai,
Presiden MMA



berkenaan yang mahu menyerai mana-mana program yang diiktiraf, layak dipertimbangkan cuti belajar gaji penuh.

Berkenaan cuti tahunan petugas kesihatan yang ketika ini masih dibekukan berikutan COVID-19, Dr Kar Chai berkata, pihaknya difahamkan cuti berkenaan akan tamat tempoh dan tidak boleh dibawa ke tahun hadapan.

Beliau berkata, berdasarkan tinjauan oleh Bahagian Pelatih, Pegawai Perubatan dan Pakar Perubatan (SCHOMOS) MMA ramai doktor lambat menerima bayaran tuntutan, malah ada yang tidak dibayar dengan alasan tiada peruntukan.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : COVID-19

LANJUT TEMPOH LUPUT CORONAVAC, CORMIRNATY

'Perkara ini bukan sesuatu luar biasa'

Oleh Mahaizura Abd Malik
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Kuala Lumpur

Lanjutan tempoh luput vaksin CoronaVac dan Cormirnaty daripada tarikh asal akan memajukan tempoh kestabilan dan keberkesanan produk dalam bebuli vaksin itu.

Presiden Persatuan Farmasi Malaysia, Amrhi Buang berkata, keputusan Bahagian Regulatori Farmasi Negara (NPRA) meluluskan permohonan lanjutan tempoh vaksin terbit tetap mengikut data semasa.

"Ini menunjukkan semua urusan regulatori dilakukan dengan baik kalau dahulu kita tengok semua vaksin diberikan pendaftaran bersyarat termasuk salah satunya aspek jangka hayat diteliti.

"Kita perlu ingat keberkesanan (vaksin) masih lagi perlu dipantau kerana ia masih baharu jadi keputusan itu tepat kerana kita mahu maklumat terkini berdasarkan data stabiliti itu dan tidak boleh berdasarkan andaian semata-mata.

"Sebelum ini kelulusan diberikan berdasarkan data stabiliti semasa misalnya layak untuk enam bulan dan hanya itu saja diluluskan NPRA pada waktu itu," katanya ketika dihubungi



NPRA meluluskan permohonan kemas kini tempoh luput bagi vaksin CoronaVac dan Comirnaty bagi tempoh enam dan tiga bulan berbanding tarikh asal yang dicetak pada label bebuli.

Harian Metro.

Beliau mengulas keputusan NPRA meluluskan permohonan kemaskini tempoh luput bagi vaksin CoronaVac dan Comirnaty masing-masing bagi tempoh enam dan tiga bulan berbanding tarikh asal yang dicetak pada label bebuli.

Katanya, permohonan berkenaan yang dikemukakan syarikat Pharmacia Life Science Sdn Bhd dan Pfizer (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd itu penting berikutan vaksin terbit masih baharu.

"Mereka mengemukakan data stabiliti baharu berdasarkan kepada kajian yang dibuat selepas kelulusan pertama yang menunjukkan

sebenarnya jangka hayatnya lagi panjang berbanding yang asal.

"Kenapa perkara ini dilakukan kerana kita tahu proses pendaftaran mana-mana produk farmaseutikal ketat dan mesti melalui NPRA untuk memastikan kualiti, selamat digunakan dan keberkesanannya.

"Perkara ini bukan luar biasa dan tidak salah dari segi keperluan regulatori untuk mana-mana produk farmaseutikal apatah lagi proses kelulusan vaksin sangat ketat di mana ia akan menjalani pemeriksaan sebelum masuk ke Malaysia atau sebelum disuntik kepada orang ramai," katanya.

Beliau berkata, pengeluaran vaksin baharu selepas ini akan turut menggunakan tarikh luput baharu yang diluluskan NPRA berkenaan.

"Ia bukan pemanjangan jangka hayat imunisasi tetapi berkaitan dengan jangka hayat kestabilan produk itu dalam vial (bebuli) berdasarkan data stabiliti baharu.

"Justeru, pemanjangan tarikh luput vaksin itu tidak akan menjejaskan dari segi kesan sampingan kepada pengguna dan keberkesanannya selepas disuntik misalnya 90 peratus adalah kekal seperti sebelum ini," katanya.

Serah kepada SPR beri kelonggaran

Melaka: Kerajaan menyerahkan sepenuhnya kepada Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya (SPR) untuk membuat pertimbangan bagi melonggarkan beberapa prosedur operasi standard (SOP) ketika hari mengundi Pilihan Raya Negeri (PRN) Melaka, Sabtu ini.

Menteri Kanan Pertahanan, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein mengakui SOP yang dilaksanakan suruhanjaya itu sepanjang tempoh berkempen pilihan raya itu agak ketat dan sedikit menyukarkan pergerakan jentera parti untuk berkempen.

"Kita serahkan kepada

SPR untuk tentukan (kelonggaran boleh diberikan). Sebagai jentera, kita akan meyakinkan pengundi yang setia kepada kita untuk berani dan yakin menunaikan tanggungjawab mengundi nanti," katanya pada sidang media di sini, semalam.

Terdahulu, beliau ditanya sama ada keperluan SPR untuk melonggarkan SOP pada hari mengundi, khususnya membabitkan petugas jentera parti yang akan membantu membawa pengundi ke pusat pengundian dalam usaha meningkatkan peratusan keluar mengundi kelak.

Kumpul data yatim piatu akibat Covid-19

Kuala Terengganu: Kerajaan negeri sedang mengumpul data berkaitan jumlah anak yatim dan yatim piatu yang kematian ibu bapa akibat Covid-19.

Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Kebajikan, Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Perpaduan Nasional Hanafiah Mat berkata, data itu penting untuk pihaknya menyalurkan bantuan wang tunai secara terus kepada anak-anak berkenaan.

"Setakat ini, hasil mak-

lumat awal, 70 pelajar menjadi yatim dan yatim piatu disebabkan kematian ibu bapa serta penjaga akibat Covid-19.

"Jabatan Kesihatan negeri (JKNT) dan Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) negeri sudah diminta untuk mengumpul data ini," katanya ditemui di lobi Dewan Undangan Negeri (Dun) sempena Mesyuarat Kedua Penggal Keempat Dun Ke-14 di sini, semalam.

95.4 peratus dewasa lengkap divaksin

Kuala Lumpur: Seramai 22,332,571 individu atau 95.4 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di negara ini telah lengkap menerima suntikan vaksin Covid-19, setakat 11.59 malam kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) melalui laman COVIDNOW, sejumlah 22,882,504 individu atau 97.7 peratus bagi populasi dewasa pula telah menerima sekurang-kurangnya

satu dos vaksinasi.

Bagi populasi remaja pula, 81 peratus atau 2,549,437 individu telah lengkap divaksinasi manakala 87.2 peratus atau 2,743,176 lagi menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin Covid-19.

Sebanyak 121,232 dos vaksin diberikan kelmarin melibatkan 25,439 suntikan dos lengkap, 6,707 menerima dos pertama dan 89,086 pula mendapat suntikan dos penggalak.

Tindakan tatatertib jika tolak vaksin berkesan

Seremban: Langkah mengekalkan tindakan tegas termasuk tindakan tatatertib terhadap penjawat awam di Negeri Sembilan yang enggan menerima suntikan vaksin Covid-19 dilihat berkesan.

Ini kerana daripada 36 individu yang enggan divaksin sebelum ini berkurangan kepada 27 orang setakat ini.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri

Aminuddin Harun, berkata pihaknya merasa sedikit lega dengan perkembangan itu dan berharap 27 individu terbit dapat mengubah fikiran dengan bersetuju menerima suntikan vaksin.

"Alhamdulillah, bilangan penjawat awam yang enggan divaksin sudah berkurangan apabila seramai sembilan individu sudah

menerima suntikan vaksin, awal minggu ini.

"Ketika ini masih terdapat seramai 27 lagi penjawat awam di negeri ini yang masih belum berbuat demikian dan kita mengalu-alukan perubahan sikap ini dan berharap mereka sedia untuk divaksin," katanya selepas mempengerusikan mesyuarat mingguan Exco

dan pelancaran kaunter cukai bergerak di Wisma Negeri di sini, semalam.

Sebelum ini, Ketua Setiausaha Negara, Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali meminta penjawat awam patuhi pekeliling Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA) yang mewajibkan mereka melengkapkan suntikan vaksin Covid-19 sebelum 1 November lalu.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : STORY OF THE DAY / NEWS

COVID-19 AND NON-COVID-19 PATIENTS

Hospitalisation in 4 states above 80pc

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THE hospitalisation rate in four states has breached the 80 per cent mark, which includes both Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 patients.

According to the CovidNow website, hospital bed utilisation in Terengganu is the highest at 91.5 per cent followed by Kelantan at 86.1 per cent.

Hospital bed utilisation in Melaka is at 82.8 per cent, while it is 81 per cent in Kedah.

The rates for other states are between 48.4 and 76.2 per cent, with the lowest bed utilisation in Putrajaya. Hospital bed utilisation at the national level is now at 68.3 per cent.

Meanwhile, Intensive Care Units (ICUs) in Klang Valley have breached the 80 per cent utilisation rate.

Checks on the website showed that the highest ICU utilisation is

in Selangor at 82.8 per cent, followed by Putrajaya (80 per cent) and Kuala Lumpur (79.6 per cent).

The rates in the other states are between 33.3 and 74.1 per cent with Labuan having the lowest ICU occupancy.

In a tweet yesterday, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the ministry had finalised the Heightened Alert System, which will kick in when indicators breach certain thresholds.

"Face masks worn properly, physical distancing where possible, avoid crowds (especially for older folks), #TRIIS, take a booster jab when offered," he tweeted.

Malaysia reported 5,413 fresh Covid-19 cases and 40 deaths, including seven brought-in-dead cases, on Tuesday. This brings the total number of cases to 2,556,865 and the national death toll to 29,769 since the pandemic broke last year.

The majority of the deaths were reported in Selangor, which had seven cases, followed by Sarawak

(six), Penang and Sabah (five each), Terengganu (four), Negri Sembilan and Kelantan (three each), Perak (two), and Kedah, Melaka and Kuala Lumpur (one each).

In the past two weeks, 16 Covid-19 deaths were reported per million people with Sarawak logging the highest among the states with 39 deaths per million people.

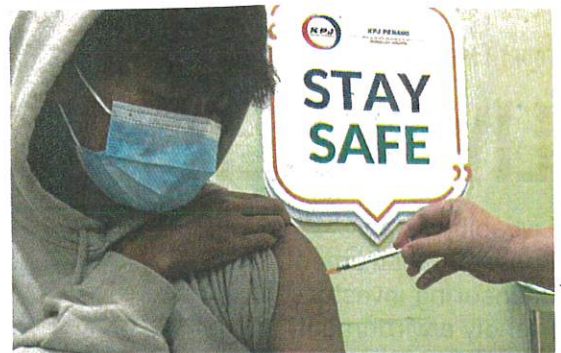
The Covid-19 infectivity rate has shown a slight decline, from 1.05 to 1.04.

The Rt rate has spiked since Nov 7 and surpassed Rt 1.0 on Nov 11. For the past three days, the infectivity rate had remained at 1.05 before dropping to 1.04 on Tuesday.

States with Rt 1.0 and above are Putrajaya at 1.15, Negri Sembilan (1.06), Selangor and Kuala Lumpur (1.05), Pahang and Kelantan (1.03) and Kedah (1.01).

A total of 6,013 recoveries were recorded, raising the cumulative number to 2,461,780.

Active cases have slightly declined to 65,316.



A man receiving his Covid-19 vaccine shot at KPJ Penang Specialist Hospital in Bandar Perda, Penang, on Monday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

Of the number, 77.7 per cent (50,765 people) are undergoing home quarantine, 12.6 per cent (8,217) are being treated at Covid-19 quarantine and treatment centres, 8.9 per cent (5,789) are hospitalised, while the remaining 0.8 per cent are in the ICU with 264 patients requiring ventilator support.

As for Covid-19 patients who are being treated in hospitals, 38.9 per cent require ventilators while 63.1 per cent are in the ICU.

Up to Tuesday, 76.2 per cent of the total population had been fully vaccinated, while 78.5 per cent have received at least one dose of

the vaccine.

There are 24,882,008 fully vaccinated, 743,672 partially vaccinated and 7,317,045 unvaccinated people. Malaysia is expected to have 80 per cent or 26,125,920 of the population fully vaccinated by June 13.

In terms of age group, 95.4 per cent of the adult population and 81 per cent of adolescents have been fully vaccinated.

Page 1 caption: People buying food at a restaurant at Medan Renong Padang Kota Lama, George Town, on Tuesday.

BERNAMA PIC

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 7
RUANGAN : PARLIAMENT / NEWS

CABINET MEMORANDUM

Ministry to seek moratorium on attempted suicide convictions

THE Health Ministry will soon submit a cabinet memorandum to apply a moratorium on attempted suicide convictions in court, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the move was made to defer sentencing under Section 309 of the Penal Code until amendments to the act are made to decriminalise suicide attempts.

"The paper is now with the ministry's Cabinet Unit and pending review by other ministries," he said in responding to queries from Tengku Zulpuri Shah Raja Puri (PH-Raub) and Che Alias Hamid (Pas-Kemaman) during the 2022 Budget debate.

Khairy earlier said between March 23 and Nov 7, a total of 232,873 calls were made to psychosocial hotlines managed by the Health Ministry and Mercy Malaysia as well as Talian Kasih

(under Women, Family and Community Development Ministry).

"The callers have shared various issues including job loss, loss of income and marital problems, with 80 per cent of them warranting emotional and psychological support.

"Some of them were referred to various agencies for intervention."

Khairy said under 2022 Budget, RM32.41 billion was allocated to the ministry, a 1.5 per cent increase compared with this year's budget.

Of the total, RM28.03 billion is allocated for operating expenditure and RM4.38 billion for development expenditure.

He said the ministry also approved a RM2 billion fund for vaccines and another RM2 billion to increase healthcare capacity like medicines, disposable items and health kits.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 6

RUANGAN : NATION

Sinovac and AZ vaccines approved for booster dose

PETALING JAYA: The Drug Control Authority has given conditional approval for the Covid-19 vaccines from Sinovac and AstraZeneca to be used as booster shots, said the Health Ministry.

In a statement yesterday, Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said approval had been given for the two vaccines to be used as booster doses for indi-

viduals aged 18 years and above who had received vaccines of the same type (homologous).

"The booster vaccine for AstraZeneca will be administered six months from when the second dose was given while for CoronaVac, the booster dose will be administered three to six months after the second dose," he added.

The administration of the booster

doses for both vaccine varieties to targeted groups will be outlined by the Covid-19 Immunisation Booster Task Force and announced from time to time.

He said the Health Ministry wanted to emphasise that the conditional registration approval required information on the quality, safety and efficacy of the vaccines to be monitored and evaluated based on

the latest data.

"This is to ensure that the comparison of benefits over risk of the vaccines remains positive," he said.

He said the ministry was committed to upgrading access to Covid-19 vaccine products in the country.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin tweeted that the conditional approval of the AstraZeneca and Sinovac booster

doses would allow the Vaccination Technical Working Group to make recommendations on who could receive the shot under the heterologous booster programme.

He also told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday that to expedite the administration of booster doses, the ministry would reopen several vaccination centres and use the services of public and private health facilities.

'Pfizer safe and effective'

Experts: Studies show no major side effects from booster shot

By **ASHLEY TANG**
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PETALING JAYA: With Malaysians apprehensive about taking the heterologous booster shot (mix-and-match approach), public health experts have assured them that no known health issues have risen from such a practice based on studies that have been conducted, noting that the delivery is safe and effective.

Universiti Malaya Department of Social and Preventive Medicine Faculty of Medicine's Prof Dr Moy Foong Ming said if individuals have no known severe side effects from the Pfizer vaccine, it is safe to get Pfizer as a booster.

"So far, there have been no reported health issues arising from the mixing - from countries such as Indonesia and Chile - using this regime," she said.

Dr Moy cited a study by the Chile Health Ministry, pointing out that the vaccine effectiveness with Sinovac as the primary vaccine and Pfizer as the booster had increased from 54% to 95% compared to using Sinovac as the booster, in which the vaccine effectiveness increased only to 74%.

As such, to have greater protection against the Delta variant and other variants that might appear in the future, she said a booster shot was necessary, adding that it was better with a heterologous method.

Dr Moy said current vaccines worked well and could prevent severe disease, hospitalisation and deaths, though the double dose vaccines would wane over time.

"A booster dose will stimulate neutralising antibodies, which are the specific antibodies that stop the virus and protect us from getting Covid-19."

"It is important to have the boost-



Extra dose of protection:

Yap Kim Thiam, 73, speaking to a healthcare worker before getting his Covid-19 booster jab at a hospital in Rawang. - FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

er dose, but it is even more important to have the first and second doses. Those who have not been vaccinated for two doses should do so quickly," she added.

Booster doses began nationwide on Oct 13 for eligible individuals.

But the Health Ministry noted that around 40% of recipients slated for their vaccine booster appointment dates under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme did not show up.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman concurred that current studies had shown that administering heterologous vaccines were "safe and effective".

"Current data shows its effectiveness and safety. There is no data on long-term complications as we are still in the pandemic situation."

"I recommend that all those who are given appointments for the booster dose come forward and be vaccinated on the given date."

"We are now racing against time, so we need to cover the vaccination as soon as possible to prevent further possible transmissions due to waning antibodies," she said.

Dr Malina added that booster doses were needed to allow the body to produce more antibodies against the infection.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's consultant clinical microbiologist Prof Dr Zamri Sekawi said the mixing of vaccines was proven to stimulate a person's antibodies.

"Maintaining high antibodies is very important for those who are at high risk of getting Covid-19."

"Studies have also shown that if you have higher levels of antibodies, you are well protected against the virus," he said.

Dr Zamri, who is also Malaysian Society of Infectious Diseases and Chemotherapy president, urged the public to take this chance to boost their antibodies as cases were rising.

"We don't know if our antibodies

have waned to very low levels, thus exposing ourselves to Covid-19," he said.

The Health Ministry had in the past assured the public of the efficacy of a heterologous booster shot.

Initially, Pfizer was the only vaccine approved as a booster shot in the country.

Yesterday, the Health Ministry said the Drug Control Authority had given conditional approval for the Sinovac and AstraZeneca vaccines as booster shots in Malaysia.

On Twitter, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin reiterated that the Pfizer booster was the best choice to increase an individual's level of protection.

With an infectivity rate of 1.04 on Tuesday, Khairy in another tweet also urged the public to practise the Covid-19 SOP.

He added that the ministry had finalised a Heightened Alert System that would kick in when indicators breached certain thresholds.

US, Europe authorities approve mix-and-match vaccine jabs

PETALING JAYA: As the public continues to take a cautious approach towards the heterologous (mix-and-match approach) Covid-19 booster shots here, such shots have been approved by health regulators in the United States and Europe for eligible individuals.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has authorised booster doses of Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. Its recommendations also approve heterologous dosing for booster shots.

These recommendations are for individuals above 65 years, those above 18 who live in long-term care settings, have underlying medical conditions or those who work or live in high-risk settings.

Eligible individuals who have received a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine shot can obtain a booster shot six months after their primary series, while those who have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine can get a booster shot two months after their primary series.

Eligible individuals can also choose which vaccine to receive as a booster dose.

According to NBC news, the US Food and Drug Administration is also expected to authorise Pfizer's Covid-19 booster shot for all adults.

Israel, which has one of the highest vaccinated populations in the world, has rolled out booster jabs across its entire population.

The European Medicines Agency has also approved Pfizer and Moderna as booster vaccines, especially for those with weakened immune systems.

More private facilities in Penang to administer vaccine shots

By **ALEX TENG and LIEW JIA XIAN**
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GEORGE TOWN: Penang has added another 26 private facilities to the existing Covid-19 vaccination centres which can administer booster shots.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the new facilities would complement the existing 47 locations.

He said the state Health Department had also received two applications to set up a Health Care

Organisation booster dose injection centre in a larger hall with the capacity to administer more than 1,000 injections per day.

"Various agencies will work together to increase public confidence in getting their booster shots."

"Focus will also be given to those who do not show up for their second vaccination dose, including those who were left out," he said in a statement recently.

According to the Penang Health Department, a total of 23,129 indi-

viduals have received their booster jabs as of Nov 11.

However, it was recently reported that as many as 40% of recipients eligible for their booster dose did not turn up for their appointments after being notified through the MySejahtera application.

Penang health committee chairman Dr Norlela Ariffin said the administering of the booster dose for front line workers and senior citizens should be sped up to better protect them from Covid-19.

She said she had proposed vaccination outreach programmes to all 145 old folk homes in the state as there had been clusters at some homes earlier.

"The state Health Department's priority is to administer booster jabs to senior citizens who have received both doses of a Covid-19 vaccine."

"But some of them refused to receive a different brand of vaccine for their booster shots after hearing stories of negative effects," she added.

Norlela said she had proposed that outreach programmes be conducted at both city councils' buildings to speed up the booster shot vaccination process for their employees.

"Both city council mayors have also urged that the administering of booster shots for the frontliners, be sped up," she said.

According to CovidNow, a total of 29,738 individuals in Penang had received their booster shots as of yesterday.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 14

RUANGAN : NATION

Move to decriminalise suicide

Health Ministry proposes moratorium on charges against attempted suicide

THE Health Ministry will propose an immediate moratorium on charges brought against those who attempt suicide, says its minister Khairy Jamaluddin (pic).

He added that the paperwork on the proposal is being finalised for approval by the government.

"On efforts to decriminalise attempted suicide, the ministry's patient management division together with input from the medical development division has prepared a Cabinet paper on a moratorium on attempted suicide (charges) under Section 309 of the Penal Code.

"The memorandum requested that the Cabinet approves an immediate moratorium period on attempted suicide (charges) under Section 309 pending the abolishment or amendments (of the provision) in Parliament," Khairy said when wrapping up his ministerial



replies on Budget 2022.

Currently, those charged with attempted suicide can be jailed up to one year or fined or both if convicted.

There have been calls by several groups for the government to decriminalise the offence of

attempted suicide.

Based on police statistics, 638 reports of suicide were recorded as of July this year, an increase of 262 cases from that recorded between January and July 2020.

Khairy said that the proposed paper on the moratorium is being

"The ministry's patient management division has prepared a Cabinet paper on a moratorium on attempted suicide."

Khairy Jamaluddin

fine-tuned by the ministry before it is presented to the Cabinet.

Earlier, Khairy informed the House that RM70mil will be allocated next year for mental healthcare, including allocations for NGOs and

those operating hotline numbers involved with mental healthcare.

He noted that this was an increase from RM24.6mil allocated for the same purpose this year.

"Of the RM70mil, RM40mil will be channelled to the Health Ministry while the remaining RM30mil will go to the Women, Family and Community Development and Higher Education ministries," he added.

On calls to hotline numbers for help, Khairy said that a total of 232,873 calls were made between March 25 last year and Nov 7 this year.

He said the calls were on various issues such as loss of jobs and incomes, and domestic and family problems.

Of this total, he added that 193,041 calls or 79.9% were those which sought emotional support and counselling.

AKHBAR : THE SUN ON THURSDAY
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

Govt versus private healthcare costs

► Patients get what they pay for – either comfortable and convenient facilities, or long waiting time and basic amenities

■ BY **ELWIN DAVA**
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PETALING JAYA: For many people, falling seriously ill could wipe out their savings or put them in debt.

Little can be done to ease the financial pain, apart from seeking treatment at government hospitals.

But cheaper healthcare has its disadvantages, the long wait to see a doctor being among them.

Consumer Association of Penang president Mohideen Abdul Kader said unless a more viable option is available, the sick will always be caught between costly healthcare and delayed treatment.

The reality is that healthcare

costs are the same at government and private hospitals.

Patients at public hospitals pay a minimum fee because most of the costs have been subsidised by the government, said Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia president Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh.

"Healthcare is not cheap anywhere in the world. Treatment at government or public hospitals is just as costly," he said.

"Since there is no itemised billing at public hospitals, patients don't realise how much it costs."

Kuljit said at private hospitals, every item or service is accounted for and shown on the bill, which makes people think it is exorbitant.

He explained that the high charges at private hospitals are due to several factors.

"Apart from the medicine and treatment, we also have to take into account the cost of building the hospital, its maintenance, the cost of medical equipment and so on. All these come at a price," he said, adding that such costs are passed on to the patient.

However, Kuljit said the cost of healthcare in Malaysia is among the cheapest in the region and is lower than in Singapore and Thailand.

The lower fees have made Malaysia a choice destination for medical tourists. In 2018, more than 900,000 foreigners came to Malaysia to seek medical treatment, with the figure rising to 1.3 million the following year.

The revenue from medical tourism doubled to RM1.7 billion in 2019, compared with 2009.

Kuljit said Malaysians would never become accustomed to the

high costs at private hospitals.

"They will compare it with government hospitals, where it is cheaper or even free of charge."

He said people could go to public hospitals if they want cheap or free treatment, but many would not for various reasons.

"Public hospitals are not as comfortable. They may not get to see the doctor of their choice and there is a long wait."

"At private hospitals, you get to enjoy the comforts, see the doctor you want and get good service, but you will have to pay for it," he added.

Kuljit said that contrary to complaints and accusations, private hospitals abide by ethical principles in their practices.

"We always inform patients upfront how much the treatment will cost. The patient will have to decide whether to proceed."

Meanwhile, Mohideen said the government should increase funding for healthcare so that more public hospitals and clinics could be built to serve the needs of the less affluent, without compromising on the quality of care.

"People are sometimes forced to go to a private hospital because of the urgency of their medical condition," he said.

He added that if private hospitals observe all provisions under the law, they cannot be accused of any legal violations.

GREEN MACHINE

... A resident loading kitchen refuse into a composting container during a demo yesterday at the launch of a One Community One Recycling Centre at the People's Housing Project in Beringin Jinjang, Kuala Lumpur.

— **BERNAMAPIX**



Sinovac, AstraZeneca may be used for booster dose

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry is considering using the Sinovac and AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines as a booster dose, said its minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

He said the matter was being discussed by the Drug Control Authority (DCA) in a meeting chaired by Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

"Among the agenda of this meeting is to consider the Sinovac and AstraZeneca vaccines as a booster dose and when the DCA has made a decision, I will announce our policy," he said when winding up the debate on the Supply Bill 2022 at the policy level in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was responding to a question

from Dr Kelvin Yil Lee Wuen (PH-Bandar Kuching), who wanted to know whether the government plans to allow the Sinovac vaccine to be given as a booster dose, especially for those who had received the same type of vaccine.

To expedite the administration of booster doses in the country, Khairy said the ministry would reopen

several vaccination centres, apart from using the services of public and private health facilities.

Khairy also said the ministry would re-evaluate the Guidelines for the Implementation of Fees (Medical)(Cost of Services) Order 2014 for non-citizen children aged below 18 whose parents are citizens or permanent residents. — **Bernama**