

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 14

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Penerima Sinovac paling tinggi pesakit kategori 4, 5

Sela masa bagi dos penggalak dipendekkan berbanding vaksin lain

oleh Latifah Arifin
latifah@bh.com.my

Kuala Lumpur: Majoriti pesakit kategori empat dan lima COVID-19 dalam kalangan individu divaksin yang dimasukkan ke Hospital Sungai Buloh dari Minggu Epidemiologi (ME) Ke-35 hingga 45 adalah penerima vaksin jenis Sinovac.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, berkata disebabkan itu, sela masa bagi pemberian dos penggalak untuk penerima vaksin primer jenis Sinovac lebih pendek berbanding vaksin jenis lain.

"Mengapa sela (masa) dos penggalak yang lebih pendek untuk Sinovac iaitu tiga bulan berbanding Pfizer atau AstraZeneca (enam bulan)?"

"Walaupun Sinovac berkesan, terdapat bukti keberkesannya berkurangan lebih cepat," katanya menerusi Twitter semalam.

Khairy berkata, data kemasukan mingguan kategori empat

dan lima ke Hospital Sungai Buloh menunjukkan peningkatan ketara bagi penerima vaksin Sinovac berbanding Pfizer dan AstraZeneca.

"Disebabkan itu, kami mahu anda mengambil apa sahaja dos penggalak yang ditawarkan," katanya.

Laporan dikeluarkan Pusat Ke-siapsiagaan dan Tindakan Cepat Krisis Kebangsaan (CPRC) Hospital Sungai Buloh itu menunjukkan kes COVID-19 kategori empat dan lima bagi penerima vaksin jenis Sinovac adalah yang tertinggi bagi setiap ME dengan ME Ke-45 merekodkan kemasukan tertinggi, iaitu seramai 165 orang.

Sementara, penerima vaksin AstraZeneca merekodkan kemasukan ke hospital terendah dengan purata kurang daripada 10 kes setiap minggu.

Kes tertinggi membabitkan vaksin AstraZeneca direkodkan pada ME Ke-38, iaitu sebanyak 12 kes.

Bagi vaksin jenis Pfizer pula, kemasukan pesakit kategori empat dan lima tertinggi direkodkan pada ME Ke-45 dengan 24 kes.

Untuk rekod, pemberian sun-

tikan penggalak dimulakan pada 13 Oktober lalu kepada warga emas berusia 60 tahun dan petugas barisan hadapan.

Terbaru, KKM mengumumkan pemberian dos penggalak secara *walk in* atau datang terus ke Pusat Pemberian Vaksin kemudahan kesihatan swasta mulai Isnin ini.

Kaedah itu akan dilaksanakan bagi lima kategori individu iaitu yang ingin mendapatkan suntikan secara lebih awal sebelum janji temu; belum menerima suntikan dos pertama atau kedua vaksin COVID-19; terlepas janji temu dan remaja berusia antara 12 hingga 17 tahun yang belum melengkapkan imunisasi.

Sementara itu, Khairy berkata, kebanyakan kes baharu COVID-19 yang dikesan ketika ini berpunca daripada kontak rapat termasuk keluarga dan kenalan.

"Disebabkan itu amalan TRIIS iaitu lakukan ujian, lapor, asingkan, maklumkan dan dapatkan rawatan segera adalah penting khususnya untuk memaklumkan keluarga anda dan rakan-rakan jika disahkan positif.

"Ini penting supaya mereka dapat segera melakukan ujian saringan sendiri," katanya.



Khairy Jamaluddin

Nilai Rt kebangsaan mula catat penurunan

Kuala Lumpur: Kes harian COVID-19 di negara ini kembali turun bawah 6,000 apabila sebanyak 5,859 kes dilaporkan setakat jam 12 tengah hari semalam.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata perkembangan itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes positif di negara ini meningkat kepada 2,581,747.

Sebelum ini Malaysia mencatat pertambahan kes harian melebihi 6,000 tiga hari berturut turut iaitu sebanyak 6,366 kes dilaporkan kelmarin, 6,380 kes pada Khamis dan 6,288 kes dicatatkan Rabu lalu.

Sementara itu, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, kadar kebolehhangkitan atau R-naught (Rt) COVID-19 mengikut kes harian di seluruh negara yang dicatatkan kelmarin mula menunjukkan trend penurunan.

Katanya, nilai Rt kelmarin ialah 1.01, menurun berbanding tiga hari sebelumnya, iaitu 1.02 yang direkodkan pada 18 November lalu, 1.03 (17 November) dan

1.04 (16 November).

Bagaimanapun, kadar Rt masih pada tahap membimbangkan berikutan hanya tiga negeri merekodkan nilai di bawah 1.00 iaitu Sabah dengan 0.98, Sarawak (0.85) dan Perlis (0.90).

Sementara itu, negeri yang mencatatkan nilai Rt tertinggi semalam adalah Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan, iaitu 1.13, diikuti Putrajaya dengan 1.12, Kuala Lumpur (1.09), Kelantan (1.08) dan Selangor (1.07).

Nilai Rt negeri lain pula adalah Pahang (1.05), Negeri Sembilan (1.04), Perak (1.01), manakala Johor dan Kedah (1.03).

Selain itu, tiga negeri mencatatkan Rt 1.00 masing-masing ialah Terengganu, Pulau Pinang dan Melaka.

Nilai Rt merujuk kepada tahap kebolehhangkitan sesuatu virus iaitu berapa kes di luar negara boleh dijangkiti oleh satu kes positif. Semakin rendah nilai itu, semakin kurang kemungkinan jangkitan bagi setiap kes positif.

Orang ramai perlu lihat data keberkesanan imunisasi

Putrajaya: Orang ramai yang bimbang berlaku kejadian 'terlebih dos' apabila mengambil dos penggalak atau dos ketiga vaksin COVID-19, perlu melihat kajian dan data tersedia mengenai keberkesanan vaksin berkenaan.

Dekan Fakulti Farmasi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Dr Mohd Makmor Bakry, berkata orang awam perlu memahami ada dua kesan membabitkan pengambilan vaksin, iaitu kesan sampingan biasa seperti sakit di tempat suntikan, demam atau kelesuan yang tidak menyebabkan maut, manakala kesan mudarat selalunya tidak dijangka dan sangat jarang berlaku.

Beliau berkata, kesan mudarat

termasuk penerima vaksin mengalami alahan teruk yang boleh memburukkan keadaan selalunya berlaku dalam tempoh singkat iaitu antara 15 hingga 30 minit selepas suntikan diberikan.

"Daripada data dikutip, secara umum penggunaan vaksin sentiasa dipantau dan sebarang kesan mudarat akan dilihat dari semasa ke semasa.

"Berdasarkan data dikeluarkan Pusat Kawalan dan Pencegahan Penyakit (CDC), tidak ada beza antara kesan selepas mengambil dos pertama, kedua dan penggalak atau ketiga," katanya kepada BH, semalam.

Mengulas kes kematian mereka yang menerima dos penggalak

termasuk dakwaan membabitkan seorang pegawai kanan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM), Dr Mohd Makmor berkata, mangsa mengambil dos penggalak pada 9 November dan kematiannya berlaku lebih seminggu selepas itu.

Beliau berkata, jika cuba dikaitkan dengan pengambilan dos penggalak sekali pun, ia mungkin tipis kerana kebanyakan kesan mudarat berlaku dalam tempoh singkat selepas dos vaksin diterima dan meminta semua pihak menunggu hasil siasatan KKM mengenainya.

Ditanya keraguan sesetengah pihak mengenai hasil kajian di Chile dan Thailand yang menjadi asas kepada keputusan pemberi-

an dos penggalak di negara ini, Dr Mohd Makmor berkata, kajian membabitkan dos penggalak dan dos ketiga dijalankan di beberapa tempat dan negara yang keputusannya hampir sama antara satu dengan lain.

Justeru, beliau berkata, hasil kajian itu boleh dipercayai, selain ia turut dinilai jawatankuasa khas dalam Jawatankuasa Jaminan Akses Vaksin (JKJAV) serta Bahagian Regulatori Farmasi Negara (NPRA).

Selain itu, beliau berkata, angapan masyarakat bahawa KKM sengaja atau 'suka-suka' memberi vaksin kepada orang ramai juga tidak berasas kerana pegawai dan kakitangan KKM sendiri

mengambilnya serta menyarankan ahli keluarga mereka disuntik dengan vaksin.

Sementara itu, pensyarah di Kluster Infektomik, Institut Perubatan dan Pergigian Ter maju Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Dr Kumita Theva Das, berkata ada beberapa kes di luar negara membabitkan individu menerima suntikan vaksin yang terlebih dan mereka hanya menunjukkan kesan sampingan sama dengan pemberian dos normal.

Selain itu, beliau berkata, tidak ada data menunjukkan seseorang boleh terlebih dos dengan vaksin, justeru dos penggalak tidak akan menyebabkan seseorang terlebih dos.

AKHBAR : KOSMO AHAD
MUKA SURAT : 10
RUANGAN : NEGARA

Kerintangan antibiotik, tingkat risiko kematian

PUTRAJAYA – Peningkatan kerintangan antibiotik menjadi ancaman yang membimbangkan di Malaysia termasuk seluruh dunia susulan penggunaan antibiotik yang tidak wajar dan berleluasa.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar berkata, isu kerintangan antibiotik boleh menyebabkan penyakit sukar diubati selain meningkatkan risiko morbiditi serta kematian.

Menurutnya, kadar kematian bagi pesakit dengan jangkitan serius disebabkan bakteria kebal yang dirawat di hospital adalah kira-kira dua kali ganda berbanding pesakit dengan jangkitan bakteria biasa.

"Dianggarkan sebanyak 700,000 kematian global setiap tahun adalah dikaitkan dengan isu kerintangan antibiotik dan sekiranya tidak dikawal angka ini dijangka meningkat kepada 10 juta menjelang tahun 2050," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian ketika berucap pada Minggu Kesedaran Antimikrob Sedunia bagi tahun 2021 yang bertemakan Hentikan Penyalahgunaan dan Penggunaan Berlebihan Antibiotik secara maya semalam.

Tambahnya, kewujudan lebih 100 antibiotik, sama ada berfungsi untuk membunuh bakteria atau menghentikan perkembangan bakteria, telah banyak membantu terutamanya dalam mempercepatkan

proses untuk sembuh.

Bagaimanapun, katanya, penggunaan antibiotik yang tidak wajar dan berleluasa telah mewujudkan masalah baru iaitu kerintangan antibiotik.

"Suatu kajian berkaitan bakteria kebal *E. coli* yang dijalankan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) pada tahun 2019 bersama pelbagai agensi mendapati bakteria kebal, *E. coli* telah tersebar secara meluas dalam kalangan manusia, haiwan dan alam sekitar di Malaysia.

"Penemuan ini adalah sesuatu yang amat membimbangkan dan kita perlu mengambil tindakan segera," ujarnya.

Khairy Jamaluddin berkata, masyarakat harus memahami bahawa tidak semua penyakit seperti batuk, selesema dan sakit tekak memerlukan rawatan menggunakan antibiotik.

Jelasnya, penggunaan antibiotik untuk rawatan sakit itu tidak diperlukan sama sekali.

"Jika tidak sihat maka dapatkan rawatan doktor, manakala preskripsi doktor adalah perlu untuk penggunaan antibiotik. Sekiranya diberikan antibiotik, ia perlu diambil seperti yang diarahkan kerana antibiotik perlu dihabiskan mengikut tempoh yang diberi dan tidak boleh dikongsi dengan orang lain.

"Antibiotik yang sudah digunakan juga tidak boleh digunakan semula untuk jangkitan pada masa akan datang," katanya.

AKHBAR : MINGGUAN MALAYSIA
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

Dos penggalak bercampur Covid-19 selamat

PUTRAJAYA: Kementerian Kesihatan menasihati orang ramai tidak bimbang dengan pengambilan vaksin Covid-19 dos penggalak yang bercampur kerana ia selamat dan tidak memberikan kesan sampingan yang serius.

Malah, sehingga kini 1.4 juta daripada populasi dewasa terutama petugas barisan hadapan dan warga emas berusia 60 tahun dan ke atas sudah menerima suntikan dos penggalak sehingga semalam.

Bercakap kepada *Mingguan Malaysia*, Ketua Pengarah Kes-

ihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, tujuan utama memberikan dos penggalak adalah untuk meningkatkan perlindungan daripada jangkitan Covid-19.

"Dos penggalak dapat meningkatkan perlindungan terhadap jangkitan Covid-19. Jadi jika menerima janji temu, pastikan hadir," katanya di sini semalam.

Sebelum ini, *Utusan Malaysia* melaporkan faktor bimbang dengan kesan akibat campuran vaksin antara alasan 60 peratus penerima dos penggalak di Nege-

ri Sembilan tidak hadir pada peringkat awal pemberiannya.

Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif Hospital Pakar CMH, Henderic Koo Teck Leng dipetik sebagai berkata, alasan itu sering ditekankan dalam kalangan warga emas dan menurutnya berpunca kurang maklumat mengenai dos penggalak.

Sementara itu, Dr. Noor Hisham bersyukur kerana isteri bekas Perdana Menteri Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad iaitu Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali secara sukarela menerima sun-

tikan dos penggalak di Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) sekali gus memberi keyakinan kepada warga emas lain turut berbuat demikian.

Menurut beliau, Siti Hasmah dimaklumkan tidak alami kesan sampingan yang serius dan sudah pun memulakan aktiviti hariannya seperti biasa.

Semalam, Malaysia merekodkan sebanyak 5,859 kes baharu dan ini menjadikan keseluruhan jangkitan meningkat di negara ini meningkat kepada 2,581,747 kes setakat ini.

AKHBAR : MINGGUAN MALAYSIA

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

Tiada wakil kerajaan 'dekati' Doktor Kontrak

KUALA LUMPUR: Belum ada wakil kerajaan sama ada Kementerian Kesihatan atau pihak lain mendekati jawatankuasa Hartal Doktor Kontrak bagi berbincang mengenai masalah lantikan tetap dan beberapa tuntutan yang disuarakan golongan berkenaan.

Bercakap kepada *Mingguan Malaysia*, jurucakap Hartal Doktor Kontrak, Dr. Muhammad Yassin berkata, setakat ini, pihaknya tidak didekati sesiapa yang mungkin berusaha untuk berunding secara baik sekali gus mengelakkan berlakunya protes siri kedua di seluruh negara.

Hal itu pula hadir selepas gerakan itu mengumumkan akan mengadakan protes siri kedua setelah kerajaan didakwa gagal menyelesaikan masalah lantikan mereka untuk berkhidmat dan memperolehi manfaat setaraf doktor tetap.

"Tiada mana-mana pihak yang menghubungi kami. Lagipun kami belum lagi menulis dan menghantar surat rasmi kepada Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin mengenai hal ini. Jadi, tiada apa-apa perkembangan lagi setakat ini.

"Apa pun, apa yang dirancang masih berjalan dan mogok akan tetap berlangsung pada awal bulan depan nanti," katanya ketika dihubungi semalam.

Dalam pada itu, Muham-

mad Yassin berkata, Hartal Doktor Kontrak dijangka mengadakan sidang akhbar esok bagi menerangkan proses dan gerak kerja mogok berkenaan di samping memberi peluang kepada pelbagai agensi media bertanyakan soalan-soalan berkaitan.

Pun begitu katanya, belum dipastikan sama ada sidang akhbar berkenaan diadakan secara dalam talian atau bersemuka selain masa dan tempat juga belum ditetapkan.

Pada 16 Oktober lalu, akhbar ini melaporkan, Hartal Doktor Kontrak merancang meletak jawatan secara besar-besaran menerusi siri mogok kedua di seluruh negara pada Disember ini, jika baki kira-kira 22,288 doktor berkenaan tidak diserapkan ke jawatan tetap oleh kerajaan.

Doktor-doktor kontrak yang belum 'diiktiraf' akan digerakkan dengan membawa plakad bermesej 'letak jawatan' sebagai simbolik protes disusuli peletakan jawatan beramai-ramai pada bulan sama namun dijangka mengambil masa antara 30 minit hingga sejam.

Utusan Malaysia baru-baru ini juga melaporkan 4,186 pegawai perubatan, pergigian dan farmasi berstatus kontrak boleh diperakukan kepada Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA) dan Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam (SPA) untuk pelantikan tetap.



GERAKAN Hartal Doktor Kontrak melakukan mogok di seluruh negara pada 26 Julai lalu selepas kerajaan didakwa gagal memenuhi tuntutan menawarkan pelantikan tetap kepada mereka.

- MINGGUAN/RASUL AZLI SAMAD

AKHBAR : NEW SUNDAY TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NEWS / NATION

Covid-19 ICU utilisation rate rises to 64.5 per cent

KUALA LUMPUR: The utilisation rate of intensive care units (ICU) for Covid-19 cases on Friday saw a slight rise to 64.5 per cent, or 542 cases, compared with 62.3 per cent the day before.

However, the ICU use in the Klang Valley remained high at 85.6 per cent (132 cases).

The Health Ministry's Covid-Now portal stated that Putrajaya had the highest ICU use rate with 90 per cent (seven cases) followed by Selangor with 88.2 per cent (93 cases) and Kuala Lumpur with 80.3 per cent (32 cases).

The ICU occupancy rate in Kelantan stood at 77.6 per cent, followed by Penang (71 per cent), Perak (68.9 per cent), Terengganu (64.9 per cent), Sabah (63.7 per cent), Melaka (60.9 per cent), Negri Sembilan (60.5 per cent), Sarawak (56.7 per cent), Johor (52.3 per cent), Perlis (47.4 per cent), Pahang (44.1 per cent), Kedah (43.2 per cent) and Labuan with (33.3 per cent).

As for hospital bed utilisation, the Klang Valley had a rate of 62.2 per cent, or 310 daily admissions on Friday.

Selangor topped the list with 72.9 per cent, or 248 admissions, followed by Putrajaya with 52.8 per cent, or 21 admissions, and Kuala Lumpur with 49.3 per cent or 41 admissions.

The nationwide utilisation rate was at 68.5 per cent, or 1,236 admissions.

Malaysia logged 45 Covid-19 deaths on Friday, with seven brought-in-dead (BID) cases.

Covid-19 has claimed 29,937 lives, including 6,052 BID victims.

Sabah recorded the highest number of new deaths with 15 cases (including six BID), followed by Selangor with seven cases (including one BID), Kedah (five), Sarawak and Kelantan with four deaths each, Penang (three), Negri Sembilan and Pahang with two deaths each, and Melaka, Perlis and Kuala Lumpur with one death each.

Johor, Perak, Terengganu, Labuan and Putrajaya reported no new deaths.

At the national level, there was an average of 18 deaths per one million people over the past two weeks, with the Klang Valley recording 11 per one million people over the same period.

Terengganu and Sarawak recorded the most deaths per one million people in the same period, with 42 and 38 deaths, respectively, followed by Kelantan and Perak with 25 each.

This was followed by Kedah with 20, Sabah (17), Perlis (16), Melaka (15), Penang (15), Negri Sembilan (14), Selangor (12), Johor and Kuala Lumpur with nine each, and Pahang with eight.

Labuan and Putrajaya reported zero deaths.

For the past two weeks, 39.6 per cent of reported Covid-19 deaths involved unvaccinated people.

Partially vaccinated people accounted for 4.5 per cent of the total fatalities, and 56 per cent of the total deaths were those who have been fully vaccinated.



An elderly man receiving the Pfizer Covid-19 booster shot at KPJ Tawakal in Kuala Lumpur on Nov 11. PIC BY AZHAR RAMLI

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS

KJ: SINOVAZ IMMUNITY WANES FASTER

Those who received this vaccine should quickly get their booster shot, says health minister

NOR AIN MOHAMED RADHI
KUALA LUMPUR
 news@nst.com.my

THE Health Ministry urged those who received the Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine not to delay getting a booster shot.

Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, said evidence suggested that the Sinovac vaccine's effectiveness waned quicker than other vaccines.

He urged those who qualified for a booster shot to get one immediately.

"Why a shorter booster interval for Sinovac (three months) vs Pfizer/ AstraZeneca (six months)? While Sinovac is effective, there is evidence that its effectiveness wanes sooner (compared with other vaccines).

"There are weekly admissions of Categories 4 and 5 patients at Sungai Buloh Hospital.

"That's why we want you to take whatever booster shot that is on offer," he said on Twitter.

Khairy shared data on admissions according to vaccination types at Sungai Buloh Hospital, the country's dedicated Covid-19 treatment facility.

The data showed that based on epidemiology weeks 35 to 45, those administered with Sinovac topped the list of admissions at the hospital.

In week 35, 48 people in Categories 4 and 5, who had completed their Sinovac vaccination, were admitted to the hospital.

This contrasted with 15 people in Categories 4 and 5, who had been administered with the Pfizer vaccine, and two AstraZeneca recipients having been admitted to the hospital in the same week.

The following week (week 36), 86 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with five Pfizer recipients and seven AstraZeneca recipients.

In week 37, 58 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 11 Pfizer recipients and one AstraZeneca recipients.

The following week, 62 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 12 Pfizer recipients and 12 recipients of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

In week 39, 65 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 10 people who took Pfizer and five AstraZeneca recipients.

In week 40, 81 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital compared with 12 Pfizer recipients and five people who received AstraZeneca.

In week 41, 125 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 18 Pfizer recipients and seven AstraZeneca recipients.

In week 42, 90 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 22 Pfizer recipients and seven AstraZeneca recipients.

In week 43, 155 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 23 Pfizer recipients and six AstraZeneca recipients.

In Week 44, 120 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 23 Pfizer recipients and seven AstraZeneca recipients.

In week 45, 165 Sinovac recipients were admitted to the hospital, compared with 24 Pfizer recipients and seven AstraZeneca recipients.

The implementation of the booster shots began on Oct 13, initially involving high-risk groups, such as the elderly, immuno-compromised individuals, those with co-morbidities and healthcare and care-home workers.

It has been expanded to include pregnant women, non-healthcare frontliners and people aged 40 and above.

The Drug Control Authority has since granted conditional approval for the use of AstraZeneca and Sinovac vaccines as booster shots.

Khairy said most the new cases emerged from close contacts, mainly family members and friends.

He said practising TRIIS, or Test, Report, Isolate, Inform and Seek, was crucial to prevent further infection.

"Inform your family and friends if you have been tested positive for Covid-19, so they can quickly do a self-test," he said.

Malaysia on Friday reported 6,355 cases.

Selangor topped the list with 1,737 new infections, followed by Kelantan (735) and Sabah (543).

Johor had 497 cases, followed by Kedah (407), Pahang (358), Penang (356), Kuala Lumpur (324), Sarawak (292), Perak (284), Terengganu (258), Melaka (233), Negri Sembilan (214), Putrajaya (82), Labuan (19) and Perlis (16).

An assistant medical officer treating a Covid-19 patient at Sungai Buloh Hospital in Selangor. FILE PIC



AKHBAR : THE SUNDAY STAR

MUKA SURAT : 11

RUANGAN : NATION

Sunday Star Says

Booster shots vital in reducing infectivity rate

THIS week's big discussion is whether people should or shouldn't take the Covid-19 booster shot.

Social media is buzzing with the supposed repercussions and negative impacts of the third jab – the problem is, it's all unfounded hearsay, and it is discouraging many people from getting their booster shots.

Last week, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said 40% of those eligible for booster shots did not turn up for their appointments.

This is a real concern for Malaysia. Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah tweeted last week that Covid-19's R-nought factor, a calculation of the average "spreadability" of an infectious disease, has also gone up again, past

the 1.0 mark.

And once again, intensive care unit beds in the country's local public hospitals are experiencing between 80% and 90% usage, which is critical.

All this means that getting the booster shot is urgent, just as it was previously vital that people get vaccinated.

Getting a booster shot is safe, as it has been given to millions of people worldwide with minimal side effects – more than 21 million Americans have received a booster, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Don't be confused or alarmed by talk in WhatsApp chat groups and social media.

Importantly, do not simply for-

ward unverified information. Check and authenticate what you read, find out where the information came from – and your aunty's next door neighbour's cousin is not a believable source (unless he or she is a scientist!).

The booster shots – Sinovac, Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines – have all been authorised for use by Malaysia's National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA).

The NPRA also says it's OK for recipients of the Sinovac vaccine to get a different vaccine.

No government body would give its approval without researching studies and precedents.

The NPRA, the country's drug control authority that authenticates

the quality, efficacy and safety of all pharmaceutical products in Malaysia, would not risk its reputation and professionalism to allow boosters if it found them unsuitable.

Sinovac vaccine recipients who worry about being scheduled to have the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as a booster should take a look at studies conducted by Chile, Brazil, and Thailand on the use of the mix and match formula.

All three countries have successfully applied the mix-and-match – aka heterologous – formula to lessen the severity of infection among those who had completed their two Sinovac jabs.

People's fear do need to be properly addressed, though. This is the

time for the government to step up efforts to create awareness about the booster shot and how it can help to reduce the infectivity rate among the population.

There should be official channels to counter the adverse social media rumours and talk about the issue.

A barrage of official information could help counter the fake news and encourage more people to keep their MySejahtera appointments to get their booster shots and bring down the R-nought value.

And don't forget that the highly infectious Delta variant is lurking within the population – booster shots are vital to keep it at bay and stop a spike in the number of cases.

We cannot afford to shut the country down again.

95.6% of adults fully vaxxed

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 95.6% or 22,379,626 individuals of the adult population in the country have completed their Covid-19 vaccination as of Friday.

Based on data from the Health Ministry, through the CovidNow website, a total of 97.8% or 22,906,258 individuals of the adult population have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

Meanwhile, 87.4% or 2,751,092 of those aged 12 to 17 have received at least one dose of the vaccine while 82.1% or 2,584,612 have completed the vaccination.

A total of 105,103 doses were administered on Friday involving 16,848 for the second dose, 6,549 for the first dose and 81,706 for the booster dose.

Khairy: Severe cases among vaccinated, take booster shots

By JOSEPH KAOS Jr
josekaosjr@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: With the number of severe Covid-19 cases among vaccinated people increasing, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin has called on all to take booster shots when able to. He said the

effectiveness of vaccines will start to wane after a few months, with the Sinovac vaccine being the quickest to lose its effectiveness.

"While Sinovac is effective, there is evidence its effectiveness wanes sooner."

"That's why we want you to take whatever booster is on offer,"

Khairy tweeted yesterday.

He explained that the faster waning period is the reason why the interval for Sinovac booster shots is three months, compared to six months for Pfizer and AstraZeneca.

In his tweet, Khairy shared a graph showing data for Covid-19 admissions in Hospital Sungai

Buloh. It revealed that most of Category 4 and 5 patients are Sinovac recipients.

The last epidemiology week (epid week 45) saw 165 Sinovac recipients admitted to Hospital Sungai Buloh as Category 4 and 5 patients.

In comparison, 24 were Pfizer recipients while seven had taken

the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The country started administering booster shots in October, with priority for the elderly, the immunocompromised as well as health and security frontliners.

To date, more than a million booster shots have been administered nationwide.

Covid-19 new cases continue to outpace recoveries, says Health DG

PETALING JAYA: New Covid-19 cases recorded yesterday outnumbered recoveries for the fourth consecutive day.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said there were 5,859 new cases and 4,970 recoveries.

Malaysia's cumulative Covid-19

case number is now 2,581,747, while the total number of recoveries to date stood at 2,482,284.

"There are 529 cases requiring treatment in intensive care units (ICUs). They comprise 420 Covid-19 cases while the remaining 109 cases are suspected, probable or still under investigation," he said in his

daily Covid-19 update.

He added that 261 cases required ventilator support.

Of the new cases, 102 cases (1.7%) were in Categories 3, 4 and 5 while 5,757 cases (98.3%) were in Categories 1 and 2.

Category 1 means a patient is asymptomatic. Category 2 is for

those with mild symptoms.

Category 3 cases experience pneumonia while cases in Category 4 have pneumonia and require oxygen. Category 5 patients are in critical stage requiring ventilator support.

Of the new cases, 19 were imported while 5,840 were local infections.

The latest data by the Health

Ministry also showed that the Covid-19 infectivity rate or R-nought (Rt) in Malaysia was 1.01, with Labuan registering the highest at 1.13, followed by Putrajaya (1.12) and Kuala Lumpur (1.09).

The states with the lowest Rt were Sabah (0.98), Perlis (0.90) and Sarawak (0.85).

AKHBAR : THE SUNDAY STAR
 MUKA SURAT : 12
 RUANGAN : NATION

Swab tests no longer needed for fully-vaxxed entering Sabah

KUALA LUMPUR: Fully vaccinated travellers will no longer need to undergo swab tests to enter Sabah starting Dec 1, says Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor.

With Sabah already in Phase Four of the National Recovery Plan (NRP), Hajiji said the state is prepared to welcome more tourists, including international ones, when Malaysia reopens its borders.

"As we have transitioned into the next phase of the NRP, the state has decided that travellers coming into Sabah do not need to take swab tests from Dec 1. They, however, need to be fully vaccinated.

"We want to revive our tourism sector. We are ready to receive more tourists who can travel here safely according to the standard operating procedure.

"We are confident the tourism sector can fully recover," he told reporters after opening the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) Fair at the World Trade Centre here yesterday.

Previously, travellers were required to take RT-PCR tests three days prior to entering Sabah.

Sabah has been selected as this year's showcase state at the MATTA Fair and has been tagged as "Malaysia's Favourite Destination".

This is the third time Sabah has been given the title. The first was in 2015 and the second in 2019.

In his speech, at the launch, Hajiji

said flights into Sabah have been increased to accommodate the new influx of tourists.

He added that by this month, there were already 266 weekly direct flights into Sabah from Kuala Lumpur, Johor Baru, Penang, Kota Baru, Labuan and Sarawak, with a total capacity of 43,000 seats.

"Within Sabah, there are 123 weekly flights with a total capacity of 16,720 seats connecting Kota Kinabalu, Lahad Datu, Sandakan and Tawau," he said.

Hajiji also said the Sabah government had implemented the Sabah Tourism Recovery Plan to improve tourism promotions post-pandemic.

"The Sabah Tourism Board (STB) has collaborated with tourism industry players to hold virtual engagements, travel expos, promotions and training on destination updates.

"This includes re-establishing trade and tourist confidence through B2B (business-to-business) and G2G (government-to-government) channels with many countries including China, South Korea, Norway, Indonesia, Brunei, India, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Kazakhstan and Turkey.

"The STB is also working with airlines and assisting them in re-establishing direct flights for domestic and international travel," he added.

Hajiji said the state government recognises the importance of tourism as an economic catalyst, with the industry identified as one of the main

pillars in its Sabah Maju Jaya Roadmap 2021-2025 development plan.

Sabah's tourism has always outperformed industry expectations in previous years, he added.

"Prior to the pandemic in 2019, the tourism industry experienced an upward trend, recording 4.1 million arrivals and registering RM8.342bil in total receipts and RM12mil in tourism tax revenue," said Hajiji.

The state will place extra focus on expanding rural and community-based tourism, which he said is one of Sabah's best performing tourism products.

"Two community-based tourism clusters, Kadamaian in Kota Belud and Kiulu in Tuaran, had chalked up a total income of RM7.57mil and attracted 270,000 visitors in 2019 alone. We look forward to widening community-based tourism in many parts of Sabah," he said.

He said Sabah also wants to promote itself as a MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) destination.

Also present at the MATTA Fair launch were Sabah Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Jafri Ariffin, Sabah Special Tasks Minister Datuk Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif, STB chairman Datuk Joniston Bangkuai, Tourism Malaysia director-general Datuk Zainuddin Abdul Wahab and MATTA president Datuk Tan Kok Leong.

A boost for tourism

Travelling to Sabah is now easier, says Bangkuai

By MUGUNTAN VANAR and
 JOSEPH KAOS Jr
 newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The Sabah government's decision to lift the Covid-19 test requirements for fully-vaccinated visitors has been hailed by the tourism industry.

Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) president Datuk Tan Kok Liang said the announcement was timely especially during the MATTA Fair period as it would create enthusiasm for tour operators to market Sabah as a prime destination.

"It is very good for tourism and it will create a spin-off effect, with hotels, the transportation sector, and restaurants all filling up.

"The Sabah Chief Minister has been very proactive, and he sees the necessity of really moving tourism and boosting (tourist) arrivals," he said when met yesterday at the 49th MATTA Fair being held at the World Trade Centre (WTCL) here.

Yesterday, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor announced that Sabah will allow fully vaccinated visitors to enter the state without swab tests starting next month and that it is fully prepared to welcome international arrivals as soon as Malaysia reopens its borders next year.

With international borders reopening, Tan said the tourism industry anticipates the establishment of more "vaccinated travel lanes" (VTLs) or similar clearance mechanisms with other countries.

"Our closest neighbour Singapore already has VTL arrangements with 15 countries and will add another six countries to that list by Dec 6 (which includes countries from Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America),"



Ready to travel: Visitors checking out the MATTA Fair at PWTC to scour for the best deals. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

shared Tan.

"As such, we urge the government to quickly establish more VTLs or travel bubbles to capture the pent-up demand, especially during the upcoming holiday season. Other popular tourist destinations, such as Kota Kinabalu and Penang, should not be overlooked in addition to Langkawi," he added.

The first day of the MATTA Fair saw people flocking to WTCL to get information on the best travel deals offered at 255 booths.

Named "Malaysia's Favourite Destination", Sabah has the largest state pavilion with 12 booths, where the Sabah Tourism Board (STB) and its exhibitors are promoting and marketing a variety of offerings.

Hajiji, who opened the MATTA Fair,

was accompanied by Sabah Tourism, Culture, and Environment Minister Datuk Jafri Ariffin and his Assistant Minister Datuk Joniston Bangkuai, and Sabah Special Tasks Minister Datuk Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif.

Bangkuai, who chairs STB, encouraged people to take advantage of the travel fair to explore Sabah even more so now that the Covid-19 swab test is being phased out.

"We are aware that the swab test requirement has been a hindrance for individuals, particularly those travelling with family, who want to visit Sabah.

"Travelling has now been made easier. It's time to begin planning a trip to the Land Below the Wind, where many adventures await," he said.