

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Kit ujian sendiri kini RM4.90 seunit

Penurunan harga pada kadar mampu milik tak jejas aspek kualiti peranti

Oleh Luqman Arif
Abdul Karim
luqman.arif@bh.com.my

Kuala Lumpur: Kit ujian pantas (RTK) antigen menggunakan sampel air liur kini dijual pada harga lebih rendah, iaitu RM4.90 tanpa menjejaskan aspek kualiti peranti berkenaan.

Penurunan harga sebanyak

87.7 peratus sejak kit berkenaan pertama kali dijual di pasaran bagi kegunaan orang ramai, disifatkan selari usaha kerajaan bagi mengekang penularan jangkitan COVID-19 dalam kalangan komuniti.

Menteri Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna, Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi, ketika mengumumkan perkara itu, berkata kit ujian sendiri COVID-19 sudah menjadi keperluan seisi rumah memandangkan kadar penularan pandemik masih tinggi di Malaysia.

Susulan pembukaan lebih banyak sektor ekonomi, pekerjaan, sekolah dan institusi pendidikan, beliau mengakui bahawa keperluan untuk membuat ujian sendiri menjadi lebih mendesak serta perlu dilakukan dengan kerap.

“Kementerian sentiasa mendengar keluhan rakyat yang terkesan akibat penjualan kit ini pada harga tinggi sebelum ini, justeru menerusi usaha bertali arus, kita berjaya menurunkan harga kit ujian sendiri daripada RM39.90 kepada harga siling RM19.90 pada peringkat runcit.

“Melalui perbincangan berterusan Kementerian bersama Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM), saya bersetuju harga kit ini perlu diturunkan lagi, tanpa berkompromi dengan kualiti kit ujian.

“Semestinya saya mahu kit ini dapat dibeli dengan harga mampu milik supaya semua rakyat dapat melakukan sendiri ujian secara kerap. Antara strateginya yang dilaksanakan adalah

dengan memberikan kebenaran kepada lebih banyak premis seperti di pasar raya dan kedai rangkaian menjualnya.

“Setakat ini, Kementerian sudah memberikan kebenaran kepada 7,302 premis di seluruh negara untuk menjual kit ujian sendiri ini yang diberikan kebenaran oleh KKM dan Pihak Berkuasa Peranti Perubatan (MDA),” katanya dalam kenyataan, semalam.

Terdahulu, Alexander menyumbangkan 2,000 naskah akhbar BH kepada rangkaian pasar raya, 99 Speedmart untuk diedarkan kepada pengunjung dan pelanggan sempena pembukaan cawangan kedai berkenaan yang ke-2,000 di Puncak Sentul, di sini.

Alexander berkata, keputusan

san memperluaskan penjualan kit ujian sendiri kepada rangkaian sektor peruncitan di negara ini menyaksikan harga peranti berkenaan berupaya diturunkan sehingga mencecah paras RM6.90 sebelum ini.

“Namun, hari ini (semalam), saya amat gembira melihat inisiatif 99 Speedmart yang sudah mula menjual kit ini pada harga RM4.90 seunit.

“Kerjasama peniaga seperti ini amat kami hargai untuk kita sama-sama membantu meringankan beban rakyat, terutama dalam usaha kita mengawal dan menurunkan jumlah kes COVID-19 di Malaysia.

“Saya berharap lebih banyak premis akan mengambil langkah yang sama dalam waktu terdekat,” katanya.

Jangkitan meningkat, 6,144 kes baharu direkod

Kuala Lumpur: Penularan kes COVID-19 di negara ini mencatatkan peningkatan dengan 6,144 kes dilaporkan setakat jam 12 tengah hari semalam, berbanding 5,755 kes kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata pertambahan kes itu menjadikan jumlah individu yang dijangkiti virus berkenaan di seluruh negara melonjak kepada 2,608,979 kes.

Katanya, sebanyak 98.4 peratus atau 6,048 kes daripada jangkitan baharu terdiri pesakit ka-

tegori satu dan dua, manakala selebihnya iaitu 1.6 peratus atau 96 kes kategori tiga, empat dan lima.

“Daripada 6,144 kes, sejumlah 12 kes adalah kes import membabitkan 11 warganegara dan seorang bukan warganegara.

“Kes yang memerlukan rawatan di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) adalah 516 kes, manakala 272 kes lagi memerlukan bantuan pernafasan.

“Sebanyak tujuh kluster baharu dikesan, sekali gus menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan

yang direkodkan 5,913 kluster dengan 235 kluster masih aktif,” katanya.

Sementara itu, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, nilai kebolehan jangkitan (Rt) COVID-19 di seluruh negara setakat kelmarin masih berada di bawah paras 1.0 iaitu 0.99.

“Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan merekodkan nilai Rt tertinggi iaitu 1.18, diikuti Putrajaya (1.12) dan Kuala Lumpur (1.05).

“Sarawak pula mencatatkan nilai Rt terendah iaitu 0.81,” katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : COVID-19

81.7% rakyat Negeri Sembilan divaksin

Seremban: Kadar populasi kalangan rakyat Negeri Sembilan yang sudah melengkapkan suntikan vaksin Covid-19 mencecah 81.7 peratus apabila 921,749 orang sudah divaksin sehingga kelmarin.

Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri, Datuk Dr Razali Ab Malek berkata, Negeri Sembilan muncul negeri pertama yang mencapai imuniti kelompok di negara ini.

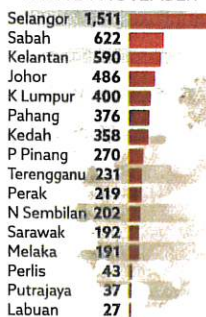
Katanya, kadar vaksinasi kalangan dewasa sudah mencapai 100 peratus.

"Alhamdulillah, Negeri Sembilan sentiasa berjalan sedundun, selenggang, seayun melalui Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) apabila populasi rakyat yang sudah melengkapkan dos vaksin mencapai 81.7 peratus.

"Usaha ini tidak akan terhasil tanpa peranan, komitmen serta dedikasi yang ditunjukkan semua petugas barisan hadapan serta mereka yang membantu di belakang tabir, yang terus berkhidmat tanpa letih dan lelah.

"Malah, bilangan penjawat awam yang enggan divaksin

PECAHAN JANGKITAN MENGIKUT NEGERI PADA 24 NOVEMBER



berkurangan daripada 64 orang sebelum ini kepada 24 orang atau 0.4 peratus ketika ini daripada keseluruhan 6,616 orang," katanya ketika berucap pada Majlis Amanat Ketua Pengarah Perkhidmatan Awam Kepada Pengurus Sumber Manusia Negeri Sembilan, di Dewan Theatre, Wisma Negeri di sini, semalam.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : COVID-19

2,607,392 populasi remaja lengkap vaksin

Kuala Lumpur: Seramai 2,607,392 atau 82.8 peratus daripada populasi remaja di negara ini lengkap menerima suntikan vaksin Covid-19, setakat jam 11.59 malam kelmarin.

Berdasarkan data Kementerian Kesihatan menerusi laman COVIDNOW, sebanyak 2,762,739 individu atau 87.7 peratus bagi golongan itu menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi dewasa pula seramai 22,442,346 individu atau 95.9 peratus su-

dah lengkap divaksinasi manakala 22,944,240 atau 98 peratus individu dewasa menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin Covid-19.

Sebanyak 138,752 dos vaksin diberikan semalam membabitkan 5,067 dos pertama, 8,428 dos lengkap serta 125,257 dos penggalak.

Perkembangan itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif pemberian vaksin bagi Program Imunisasi Covid-19 Kebangsaan (Pick) kini meningkat kepada 52,391,444. - Bernama.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NEGARA



KES sporadik Covid-19 lebih tinggi berbanding jangkitan dalam kluster dalam tempoh dua minggu lalu. - GAMBAR HIASAN

Negara catat kes sporadik tertinggi

PUTRAJAYA – Data kes Covid-19 mengikut punca penularan di seluruh negara dalam tempoh dua minggu terkini menunjukkan kes sporadik lebih tinggi berbanding jangkitan melalui kluster.

Berdasarkan maklumat yang dikongsikan COVIDNOW, secara purata untuk tempoh tujuh hari, sebanyak 5,564 kes sporadik direkodkan.

“Untuk kes penularan dalam kluster pula, sebanyak 181 kes dilaporkan untuk tempoh tersebut,” demikian maklumat pada laman web itu setakat tempoh dua minggu sehingga 23 Novem-

ber lalu.

Kes sporadik ialah kes tanpa gejala yang dikesan dalam komuniti, namun tidak dapat dikaitkan dengan mana-mana kes atau kluster sedia ada.

Dalam pada itu, sebanyak 37 kes kematian Covid-19 dilaporkan, menjadikan jumlah kematian di Malaysia mencecah 30,147 kes serta tiada kes kematian dilaporkan dalam tempoh 24 jam kelmarin.

Terdapat sembilan kes meninggal dunia di luar hospital atau brought-in-dead (BID) dengan jumlah kes BID terkini se-

banyak 6,096 kes.

Kesemua kematian dilaporkan di Terengganu (7), Negeri Sembilan (5), Sabah (5), Kelantan (4), Selangor (4), Johor (3), Perak (3), Kedah (2), Pahang (2), Sarawak (1) dan Kuala Lumpur (1) serta tiada kematian di Melaka, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Labuan dan Putrajaya.

Sementara itu, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, jangkitan harian melepasi angka 6,000 dengan 6,144 kes dilaporkan semalam, menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes Covid-19 sebanyak 2,608,979 kes.

Ada premis boleh jual RM4.90 seunit

Harga kit ujian sendiri perlu lebih murah

Oleh EDDY HAMIDI

PETALING JAYA – Menteri Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna, Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi memaklumkan harga kit ujian sendiri Covid-19 perlu diturunkan lagi agar rakyat Malaysia dapat melakukan ujian sendiri secara kerap.

Beliau berkata, seiring dengan pembukaan lebih banyak sektor ekonomi, pekerjaan, sekolah dan institusi pengajian, sudah pasti keperluan untuk melakukan ujian sendiri menjadi lebih mendesak dan kerap dilakukan.

“Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna (KPDNHEP) sentiasa mendengar keluhan rakyat yang

terkesan akibat penjualan set ini pada harga tinggi sebelum ini.

“Melalui usaha yang diadakan oleh kementerian, kita sudah berjaya menurunkan harga kit ujian sendiri ini daripada RM39.90 kepada harga siling RM19.90 di peringkat runcit,” katanya menerusi satu hantaran di Facebook semalam.

Jelasnya, menerusi perbincangan berterusan antara KPDNHEP dan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM), beliau bersetuju bahawa harga kit itu perlu diturunkan lagi tanpa berkompromi dengan kualitinya.

“Semestinya saya mahu kit ini dapat dibeli dengan harga mampu milik agar rakyat dapat membuat sendiri ujian secara kerap.

“Antara strategi dilaksanakan KPDNHEP adalah memberi kebenaran kepada lebih banyak premis seperti pasar raya dan kedai rangkaian menjual kit ujian yang telah mendapat kebenaran pihak Berkuasa Peranti Perubatan (MDA) dan KKM,” katanya.

Dalam pada itu, beliau turut memuji inisiatif yang diambil oleh kedai serbaneka 99 Speedmart yang sudah mula menjual kit ujian tersebut pada harga serendah RM4.90 seunit.

“Kerjasama daripada peniaga seperti ini amat kami hargai, bagi kita bersama-sama membantu meringankan beban rakyat, terutama dalam usaha kita mengawal dan menurunkan jumlah kes Covid-19 di negara kita,” katanya.



ALEXANDER (dua dari kanan) memegang kit ujian sendiri Covid-19 yang dijual pada harga RM4.90 di salah sebuah cawangan kedai serbaneka 99 Speedmart di Sentul, Kuala Lumpur.

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

POSSIBLE FOURTH WAVE

'COMBAT FAKE NEWS ON VAX, BOOSTER SHOT'

Increasing prevalence of anti-vaxxers spreading fear about risks of jabs, says Lam Thye

THARANYA ARUMUGAM
 AND DHESEGAAN BALAKRISHNAN
 KUALA LUMPUR
 news@nst.com.my

As a fourth coronavirus wave looms, it is crucial that the government take proactive steps to combat fake news and widespread mistrust of Covid-19 vaccines and booster shots.

Alliance for Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said it was necessary to mitigate fear among the people for better pandemic preparedness and control.

"It is speculated that a spike in cases is a possible outcome of the recent political activity leading up to the Melaka election last Saturday.

"Any increase will only be seen on or after the end of November as it takes at least 10 days before symptoms begin to show.

"Given our collective experience over the last three waves, it is safe to assume that most people will also be well prepared to deal with a Covid-19 resurgence due to the fact that they have already received their two doses of vaccine and are now waiting for the booster dose.

"But what is disconcerting is the increasing prevalence of anti-vaxxers who are spreading fear about the risks of getting vaccinated," he said in a statement yesterday.

Their actions, Lee said, were due to anxieties caused by what they considered uncertainties.

He said it was therefore important that the people's fears were allayed by the dissemination of correct information in a timely manner.

"Uncertainties will always be

with us — whether it is the economy, our finances, our health, our families or political developments. And anxieties can leave us feeling stressed with a sense of hopelessness.

"The Health Ministry has a very important role to play."

Lee stressed that the authorities must monitor fake news and propaganda generated and circulated on social media, and counter these with facts and figures. This, he said, must be done regularly.

"Over time, the authorities and rakyat will be on the same page, and together we will face this pernicious enemy in a possible fourth wave or beyond."

On a related matter, Lee said while the MySejahtera mobile application had improved, there was still a need for some refinements. For instance, he said, many people were forgetful of the "check out" feature and did not press the button after leaving a shop, restaurant, clinic or any other establishment.

"This feature is designed to help the user to gain access but it could also be troublesome to the person concerned if he or she does not check out and will be contacted in the event of the emergence of Covid cases in the area.

"Could the Health Ministry include an additional feature that will keep reminding the user, audibly or visually, to check out?"

Touching on other challenges faced by the people, Lee said the government should look into offering Covid-19 self-test kits for free as a public health measure to manage the pandemic crisis.

"Otherwise, the authorities need to determine a rate for the self-test kits that is affordable to the people as for regular users with a low income, the costs can be high."

Epidemiologist Associate Professor Dr Malina Osman from Universiti Putra Malaysia suggested that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission develop an algorithm to trace fake news related

to Covid-19 vaccines.

The algorithm, she said, would assist the authorities to root out fake news peddlers and stem the spread of misinformation.

She said this should be done urgently to prevent booster-hesitancy among fully vaccinated individuals.

"The government should also consider providing incentives such as tax relief or rebates for social media influencers who propagate positive information on the vaccines.

"Malaysia also needs a specific legislation to tackle this matter. Currently, we do not have an act that prevents non-experts in a subject matter from disseminating misleading advice.

"Medical practitioners are regulated on this matter through the Medical Act 1971. However, no such legislation has been enacted to prevent those without medical competencies from spreading false information," she told the *New Straits Times*.

The government, she said, had displayed data transparency by sharing information on adverse events following immunisation on the Github open data platform.

However, she said, the government should rope in competent medical experts to crunch, interpret and convey the data to the public.

Page 1 pic: A senior citizen getting the Covid-19 booster shot at the Dewan Besar Tzu Chi vaccination centre in Batu Berendam, Melaka, yesterday.



Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NATION / NEWS

PANDEMIC UPDATES

6,144 new Covid-19 cases yesterday

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia recorded 6,144 new Covid-19 cases up to noon yesterday, marking a rise after being in the range of between 4,000 and 5,000 for the past four days.

On Sunday and Monday, the figures stood at 4,854 and 4,885 cases, respectively, before it climbed to 5,594 and 5,755 on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, on his official Facebook page, said the fresh infections brought the national tally to 2,608,979 since the pandemic struck last year.

According to data from the Health Ministry's CovidNow portal, the bed occupancy rates for Covid-19 patients in the Intensive Care Units (ICU) nationwide stood at 62.9 per cent up to Wednesday, while 506 active cases were recorded.

The ICU bed utilisation in the Klang Valley declined slightly to 78.9 per cent with 125 active cases compared with 81.3 per cent

with 127 cases on Tuesday.

Selangor had the highest bed utilisation rate at 80.3 per cent with 86 active cases followed by Putrajaya at 80 per cent with eight active cases and Kuala Lumpur at 76.3 per cent with 31 active cases.

A total of 270 Covid-19 active cases or 37.3 per cent were on ventilator support nationwide.

Perak recorded the highest ventilator usage at 55.1 per cent with 23 active cases, followed by Terengganu at 46.2 per cent with 19 cases and Kedah at 45.2 per cent with eight cases.

Meanwhile, 37 deaths, including nine brought-in-dead cases, were recorded on Wednesday. This brought the nation's total fatalities to 30,147.

Terengganu registered the

highest death toll at seven followed by five each in Sabah and Negri Sembilan, and four each in Selangor and Kelantan.

Three deaths were reported in Johor, two each in Kedah and Pahang, three in Perak, and one each in Sarawak and Kuala Lumpur.

No deaths were reported in Melaka, Perlis, Penang, Labuan and Putrajaya.

To date, 25,049,738 people have been fully vaccinated while 657,241 have received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

A total of 7,317,045 people have yet to be immunised against Covid-19.

Currently, 55,705 people are observing home quarantine, while 7,584 are at the Covid-19 quarantine and treatment centres.



Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

D-G: Number of civil servants yet to get vaccinated very low

SEREMBAN: Public Service Department (PSD) director-general Tan Sri Mohd Khairul Adib Abd Rahman does not want the few civil servants who have yet to receive their Covid-19 vaccination to affect the government's focus on the country's development.

He said the number of civil servants who had yet to be vaccinated according to departments was very low compared with the overall 1.6 million civil servants.

Khairul Adib said PSD had instructed the heads of departments to take action according to its circular, as well as the stipulated guidelines.

"The primary focus of PSD is to ensure the smooth execution of the country's development and the 2022 Budget, as well as the 12th Malaysia Plan.

"The budget has been tabled and allocations have been provided, so civil servants must be ready to implement the projects, aid schemes, as well as govern-

ment policies to revive the economy.

"The public service plays a key role in national development," he said after the address of the director-general of public service to Negri Sembilan human resources managers at Wisma Negeri here yesterday.

In another development, Khairul Adib said the government would look holistically at the World Bank's proposal to extend the retirement age of civil servants beyond 60 years.

"There is a proposal (on raising the retirement age) from the World Bank in stages, which is year by year depending on the health of civil servants and availability of healthcare facilities.

"Many are still able to serve after 60 years, so we will review the World Bank's proposal, but it has to be balanced with the 500,000 graduates coming out of the higher education system every year."

Bernama



Tan Sri Mohd Khairul Adib Abd Rahman



To date, 7,302 premises have been allowed to sell the self-test kits that have been approved by the Health Ministry and the Medical Device Authority.

FILE PIC

Self-test saliva kit now available at RM4.90

KUALA LUMPUR: The public can now get the Covid-19 self-test saliva antigen rapid test kit at RM4.90 each.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi said despite the lower price, the quality of the self-test kits would not be compromised.

"Covid-19 self-test kits have become a necessity for every household, judging by the coronavirus situation in the country.

"With more economic sectors, schools and educational institu-

tions reopening, it is necessary for people to self-test periodically. Through continuous meetings between my ministry and the Health Ministry, I have given the green light for the price of the self-test kits to be further reduced without compromising on the quality of the product," he said in a Facebook post yesterday.

He said to ensure that the self-test kits were easily accessible, the ministry had allowed more supermarkets and chain stores to sell Covid-19 self-test kits that had been approved by the Med-

ical Device Authority (MDA).

"To date, 7,302 premises have been allowed to sell the self-test kits that have been approved by the Health Ministry and MDA."

He said while the prices of the test kits were previously reduced to RM6.90 each, he welcomed the initiative by 99 Speedmart (chain of convenient stores) to sell the self-test kit at RM4.90 each, starting yesterday.

"We appreciate this initiative, which will ease the burden of people and hope other premises will follow suit."

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : NATION

Better protection via mix-and-match boosters

By IMRAN HILMY
imran@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: Getting a heterologous booster shot is safe and highly protective, says a virologist.

The boosters would be crucial for the elderly and those with comorbidities and immunodeficiencies, said Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) virologist Dr Kumitaa Theva Das.

She cited a study in the United Kingdom where the antibody levels of those fully vaccinated and in their 60s began to wane as early as six weeks after the second shot.

In some cases, she said, the efficacy rate fell more than 50% after 10 weeks.

"Likewise, the antibody levels seem to be high among those aged 60 and above who got their booster shots in the United States, the UK and Israel.

"This is apparent after six months of getting their booster jabs.

"In other words, fully vaccinated people are like protected by a shield while those with booster doses will be protected by two shields," she said.

Booster doses began nationwide on Oct 13 for eligible individuals.

Dr Kumitaa said studies in some countries had shown that the mix-and-match approach was not only safe but provided better protection.

"In March this year, several countries carried out the heterologous method by giving out two different types of vaccines as first and second doses.

"The results showed that such method is safe and highly protective."

Dr Kumitaa said the public could always sign up for the boosters first



Need for more awareness:

Dr Kumitaa says the public can always sign up for the boosters first before consulting the doctors at the vaccine dispensing centres.
— SAMUEL ONG/The Star

before consulting the doctors at the vaccine dispensing centres.

"Tell them your concerns.

"These doctors are always willing to explain and answer any question you may have and put you at ease in taking the booster shots," she added.

Dr Kumitaa said boosters most likely would not be needed if the healthcare system is still dealing with the original strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

She said the vaccines were developed to optimally work against that strain and was proven to be extremely effective.

"But with Delta being the prevalent strain, together with new strains from neighbouring countries like Delta Plus, Lambda and Mu, they could reduce the immune

protection," she said.

Dr Kumitaa said new Covid-19 variants are likely to emerge as long as there are unvaccinated people.

"With new variants, this might push back how quickly a country is able to recover and when it can move to an endemic phase.

"There is a higher probability for the virus to mutate in the body of unvaccinated people.

"SARS-CoV-2 roughly mutates once in two weeks while for the Delta variant, it has shown that infection can last up to 18 days in the body of those unvaccinated people.

"For those who have been vaccinated, even if they do get infected, the duration of infection tends to be shorter, roughly between five and seven days.

"This reduces the possibility of

new variants emerging with possible breakthrough infections," she said.

Penang Hospital infectious disease unit head Datuk Dr Chow Ting Soo said the Delta variant is the reason that booster jabs are needed as it is more transmissible and could reduce the vaccine and treatment efficacy.

She said the efficacy of the Sinovac vaccine starts to wane after three months and six months for Pfizer or AstraZeneca.

She also said that if the virus keeps mutating and changing, a regular vaccine jab might be needed in the future.

"The virus is too new for all of us. Experts still don't have an answer now on whether we need to be jabbed regularly," she added.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 16

RUANGAN : NATION

KJ: Contract doctor issue to be raised in Cabinet

Doctors urged to hold off on protest till decision is made

By **SARBAN SINGH**
sarbans@thestar.com.my

SEREMBAN: The plight of contract doctors in government service who are demanding to be made permanent will be raised in Cabinet in a fortnight, says Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

He said a solution was needed to prevent the issue from being raised every now and then.

"I will present a memorandum on the short- and long-term solutions to this matter to the Cabinet," he told reporters when met after the state-level national Youth Consultative Council meeting here yesterday.

Khairy expressed hope that the doctors would defer plans to hold a protest until the Cabinet decided on the matter.

On Nov 16, the Hartal Doktor Kontrak movement said it would stage a "symbolic mass resignation" next month if the government did not hire 22,288 contract doctors on a permanent basis soon.

The movement's spokesman, Dr Muhammad Yassin, said the planned protest would see affected contract doctors staging a protest march while carrying placards with the words "Mass Resignation".

The movement was organising a second protest as it felt that the government did not address the contract doctor issue in Budget 2022.

He said the protest could last up

to an hour, followed by en masse resignation in the same month.

Khairy expressed hope that the Cabinet would give its nod to hire a certain number of contract doctors for now.

"Once we get the green light, I will announce the number we can take.

"I hope those planning the protest will wait until the paper is taken to the Cabinet and not disrupt medical services that are being provided," said Khairy, adding that the government was in no position to make all contract doctors permanent at one go.

"We can probably absorb those who have finished their housemanship, compulsory service or those in the first few cohorts.

"The rest will depend on the longer-term solution," he said.

Separately, Khairy said the standard operating procedures for the Sarawak state election would be finalised by Nov 30.

He said Deputy Health Minister II Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang had been tasked to look into the matter.

"I had a discussion with the Sarawak state secretary this (Thursday) afternoon on the SOP for the state election.

"There are some issues that we need to fine tune and once this is done, we will submit the recommendations to the Election Commission," Khairy added.

The Sarawak election will be held on Dec 18, with nomination on Dec 6 and early voting on Dec 14.

AKHBAR : THE SUN ON FRIDAY

MUKA SURAT : 4

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

3 active Covid clusters in Labuan

LABUAN: The Labuan Health Department is battling three Covid-19 clusters, with two of them causing more infections and spreading fast, said its director Dr Ismuni Bohari.

He said they were the Merinding 2 Cluster, which broke out at the Labuan Matriculation College on Oct 28; and the Bukit Kuda and Jalan Jati clusters, which surfaced on Nov 18 and Nov 21 respectively.

"The Merinding 2 cluster emerged after several students from the mainland (Sabah) enrolled for the new semester. Infection spread to students in the hostel and staff but the

cluster is manageable," he told Bernama yesterday.

He said the Bukit Kuda cluster emerged following an engagement ceremony hosted by a local whose guests include relatives from the mainland.

"This cluster spread widely to those who attended the ceremony ... and we are still tracing the close contacts for screening, and efforts are being made to break the chain of infection," he said.

Ismuni said the Jalan Jati cluster involved a bistro in Jalan Jati downtown with several patrons believed to have caused the infections. — Bernama

'A handful declined vaccination'

SEREMBAN: Public Service Department (PSD) director-general Tan Sri Mohd Khairul Adib Abd Rahman does not want the few civil servants who have yet to receive their Covid-19 vaccination to affect the government's focus on the country's development.

He said the number of civil servants who have yet to be vaccinated is very small compared with the total 1.6

million civil servants currently.

Mohd Khairul Adib said PSD had ordered the respective heads of departments to take the appropriate action according to the circular as well as the stipulated guidelines.

"The primary focus of PSD is to ensure the smooth execution of the country's development plans, Budget 2022 and the 12th Malaysia Plan." — Bernama