

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
 MUKA SURAT : 8
 RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Kadar kematian warga emas dijangkiti meningkat

Kumpulan usia 80 tahun ke atas berisiko maut jika tiada vaksinasi, dos penggalak

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Putrajaya: Kadar kematian dalam kalangan warga emas yang dijangkiti COVID-19 di negara ini, didapati semakin meningkat, terutama membabitkan kumpulan usia 80 tahun dan ke atas.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata kadar kematian dalam lingkungan umur itu jauh lebih tinggi berbanding dengan kumpulan warga emas yang berusia 60 hingga 79 tahun.

Katanya, kadar kematian membabitkan pesakit COVID-19 yang berumur 80 tahun ke atas adalah 2,000 bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk negara ini, berbanding 300 hingga 600 kes bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk yang berusia 60 hingga 79 tahun.

"Ini kerana individu yang berumur 80 tahun ke atas ini mempunyai daya tahan tubuh yang

rendah, menghadapi pelbagai penyakit kronik dan faktor fraility menyebabkan proses penyembuhan dan pemulihan dari jangkitan COVID-19 juga lebih perlahan dan rumit.

"Sejak Minggu Epidemiologi (ME) 3/2022, kadar kemasukan pesakit COVID-19 dalam kalangan warga emas meningkat daripada 1.0 per 100,000 populasi kepada 9.0 per 100,000 populasi pada ME 10/2022.

"Seperti yang diketahui umum, ada dalam kalangan kes COVID-19 yang akan merosot, memasuki unit rawatan rapi (ICU) atau meninggal dunia.

"Justeru, kenaikan kadar kemasukan pesakit COVID-19 dalam kalangan warga emas ke hospital ini amat membimbangkan.

"Data jelas menunjukkan bahawa warga emas yang tiada vaksinasi atau tiada dos penggalak amat berisiko tinggi meninggal dunia akibat COVID-19," katanya dalam kenyataan semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, daripada ME 1/2022 sehingga ME 10/2022, 86,804 kes COVID-19 membabitkan pesakit berusia 60 tahun dan ke atas dan daripada

jumlah itu sejumlah 83,709 kes atau 96.44 peratus direkodkan berada dalam kategori satu dan dua.

"Selain itu, 3,095 kes, iaitu 3.56 peratus pula mengalami jangkitan COVID-19 kategori tiga hingga lima, ternyata peratusan bagi liputan vaksinasi yang tinggi dalam kalangan warga emas itu membantu mengurangkan kes COVID-19 dalam kategori serius.

"Namun, liputan dos penggalak perlu dan boleh dipertingkatkan lagi daripada 74.2 peratus supaya warga emas lebih terlindung daripada bahaya komplikasi dan kematian akibat jangkitan COVID-19.

"Data jelas menunjukkan pada ME 39/2021 hingga ME 9/2022 kadar kematian dalam kalangan penerima dos penggalak juga lebih rendah berbanding kumpulan yang tidak divaksin, lengkap vaksin namun tiada dos penggalak," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, pengambilan dos penggalak itu perlu kerana tahap imuniti dalam badan terhadap virus SAR-CoV2 akan berkurang (*waning immunity*) selepas beberapa bulan in-

dividu berkenaan menerima vaksin.

"Begitu juga dengan tahap imuniti semula jadi (*natural immunity*) seseorang individu terhadap virus ini selepas dijangkiti virus SAR-CoV2. Kajian menunjukkan pengambilan dos penggalak mampu meningkatkan tahap imuniti bagi memberikan perlindungan optima daripada gejala teruk dan kematian daripada jangkitan COVID-19," katanya.

Sebanyak 27,004 kes baharu COVID-19 direkodkan setakat kelmarin, menjadikan jumlah individu yang sudah dijangkiti virus berkenaan kini meningkat kepada 3,927,437 kes.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, daripada jumlah yang dikesan itu sebanyak 26,285 kes adalah penularan tempatan dengan 719 adalah import yang mendapat jangkitan dari luar negara.

Katanya, kategori paling banyak dikesan kelmarin adalah kategori dua dengan 57.92 peratus atau 15,642 kes, diikuti kategori satu dengan 11,163 kes bersamaan 41.34 peratus.

"Selain itu ialah kategori empat dengan 72 kes, kategori lima (64) dan kategori tiga (63). Secara keseluruhannya, daripada 199 kes bagi kategori tiga hingga lima, sebanyak 105 kes (52.76 peratus) adalah individu yang mempunyai komorbid," katanya.



Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 25

RUANGAN : SINAR NEGERI

JKNT pantau makanan di bazar Ramadan

KUALA TERENGGANU

Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Terengganu (JKNT) akan menggerakkan lebih 100 penguat kuasa untuk memantau makanan di bazar Ramadan sepanjang bulan puasa nanti bagi menjamin keselamatan dan kualiti juadah dijual kepada pengguna.

Timbalan Pengarah Kesihatan Negeri Terengganu (Bahagian Keselamatan dan Kualiti Makanan), Che Ghani Sidek berkata, pemantauan itu akan dilakukan dengan kerjasama pasukan penguat kuasa pihak berkuasa tempatan (PBT).

"Pemantauan akan dibuat bermula hari pertama Ramadan di bazar Ramadan semua lapan daerah iaitu Kemaman, Dungun, Marang, Hulu Terengganu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuala Nerus, Setiu dan Besut," katanya kepada pemberita di sini



CHE GHANI SIDEK

pada Jumaat.

Sementara itu, menurut Che Ghani, beberapa pelanggaran peraturan berjaya dikesan hasil daripada sampel makanan yang diambil di bazar Ramadan pada tahun lalu dan proses undang-undang sedang dilaksanakan.

Sehubungan itu, beliau berkata, pengambilan sampel makanan secara rawak di bazar Ramadan tahun ini akan diteruskan seperti biasa bagi menjamin makanan yang dijual kepada pelanggan bebas daripada sebarang pencemaran yang boleh menyebabkan mudarat dan membahayakan kesihatan pengguna.

"Tahun ini kita tidak adakan kempen keselamatan makanan sebaliknya jalankan penguatkuasaan kepada peniaga dan pada masa sama kempen kesedaran," jelasnya.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
 MUKA SURAT : 11
 RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT

Kematian warga emas akibat Covid-19 paling tinggi

Terutama kepada individu tanpa vaksinasi lengkap, tidak mengambil dos penggalak

KUALA LUMPUR

Kadar kematian akibat Covid-19 dalam kalangan warga emas terutamanya yang belum menerima vaksinasi lengkap dan dos penggalak adalah jauh lebih tinggi berbanding kumpulan umur yang lain, kata Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

Berdasarkan data bagi Minggu Epidemiologi (ME) 1/2022 hingga ME 10/2022, kadar kematian bagi warga emas 80 tahun dan ke atas adalah lebih tinggi iaitu 2,000 kes bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk berbanding warga emas berumur 60 hingga 79 tahun iaitu 300 hingga 600 kes bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk.

"Ini adalah kerana daya tahan tubuh yang rendah, menghadapi pelbagai penyakit kronik dan faktor fraility menyebabkan proses penyembuhan serta pemulihan daripada jangkitan Covid-19 juga lebih perlahan dan rumit," katanya dalam satu kenyataan pada Jumaat.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, warga emas yang tidak divaksinasi paling berisiko mendapat jangkitan teruk dan seterusnya mengakibatkan kematian, namun sebaliknya yang telah menerima vaksinasi lengkap dan dos penggalak adalah paling terlindung dengan kes jangkitan kategori satu dan dua melebihi kes kategori tiga hingga lima.

Jelas beliau, sebanyak 86,804 kes Covid-19 melibatkan warga emas di-



Warga emas disarankan mengambil vaksin dan dos penggalak bagi mengelak risiko mendapat jangkitan teruk dan seterusnya mengakibatkan kematian akibat Covid-19.

laporkan dari ME 1/2022 hingga ME 10/2022 dengan 83,709 kes atau 96.44 peratus kategori satu dan dua, manakala 3,095 kes atau 3.56 peratus melibatkan kategori tiga hingga lima.

"Ternyata peratus liputan vaksinasi yang agak tinggi dalam kalangan warga emas telah membantu mengurangkan kes Covid-19 yang serius bagi kumpulan ini, namun liputan dos penggalak perlu dan boleh dipertingkatkan lagi daripada 74.2 peratus agar golongan ini lebih terlindung daripada bahaya komplikasi dan kematian akibat Covid-19," katanya.

Beliau berkata, kadar kemasukan ke hospital untuk warga emas meningkat daripada satu kes bagi setiap 100,000 populasi kepada sembilan kes dari ME 3/2022 hingga ME 10/2022 dan kemasukan bagi kes kategori tiga hingga lima adalah paling tinggi dalam kalangan warga emas.

Sehingga 16 Mac, seramai 3,356,253 atau 92 peratus warga emas di negara ini telah menerima dos primer vaksin Covid-19 yang lengkap manakala 2,489,718 atau 74.2 peratus daripada kumpulan berkenaan telah mengambil dos penggalak.

Dr Noor Hisham menggesa warga emas yang belum menerima vaksin Covid-19 termasuk dos penggalak untuk segera mendapatkannya dari Pusat Pemberian Vaksin (PPV) yang terdekat secara jumpa terus terutama sebagai persediaan memasuki fasa peralihan ke endemik bulan depan.

Beliau berkata, anak-anak dan ahli keluarga memainkan peranan penting untuk memastikan warga emas dalam keluarga mereka dapat menyertai serta melakukan aktiviti-aktiviti yang dibenarkan mulai 1 April depan dengan selamat.

- Bernama

Tahap kestabilan kesihatan awam diukur jumlah kemasukan ke ICU



KHAIRY

KUALA LUMPUR - Kesan dan tahap kestabilan kesihatan awam selepas pembukaan sempadan negara hanya dapat diukur menerusi kadar kemasukan ke unit rawatan rapi (ICU), kata Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar.

"Kita akan mula buka sempadan pada 1 April ini dan kita nak tengok kesan kepada pembukaan itu. Kita jangka pembukaan ini dibuat dengan selamat dan tidak ada tekanan kepada sistem kes-

ihatan awam.

"Tetapi apa yang kita tidak tahu adalah dari segi varian baharu Omicron. Ini kita masih pantau sebab kita tahu Omicron ada sub unit dan pakar di Kementerian Kesihatan sedang memantau. Kalau kita lihat negara Eropah, kadar jangkitan turun dan naik," katanya pada Jumaat.

Beliau berkata demikian sebagai menjawab pertanyaan mengenai cara mengukur tahap kestabilan kesihatan awam yang

diguna pakai Kementerian.

Perdana Menteri, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob pada 8 Mac mengumumkan Malaysia akan memasuki fasa peralihan ke endemik dan pembukaan semula sempadan negara mulai 1 April.

Menurut Ismail Sabri, keputusan itu dibuat setelah mengambil kira pelbagai faktor, melakukan penilaian risiko, mendapatkan pandangan Kementerian Kesihatan dan meneliti syor daripada Menteri Kuartet.

Mengulas lanjut, Khairy berkata, turut dipantau adalah dari segi kelonggaran solat tarawih.

"Saya nak tengok selepas 1 April ini, lebih kelonggaran solat tarawih dan sebagainya, melonjak naik atau tidak, (bilangan) kes tak apa, cuma kemasukan hospital dan ICU itu saya nak lihat dalam beberapa bulan lagi (sama ada) keadaan itu stabil atau tidak," katanya. - Bernama

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NATION/NEWS



The reactivated Malaysia Agro Exposition Park Covid-19 Quarantine and Low-Risk Treatment Centre is currently housing more than 130 patients. FILE PIC

HIGH TURNOVER

MAEPS PKRC TREATING KIDS, UNVAXXED ADULTS

Facility has adjusted admission criteria, sees up to 50 patients daily, says director

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THE reactivated Malaysia Agro Exposition Park (MAEPS) Covid-19 Quarantine and Low-Risk Treatment Centre (PKRC) has widened its scope of patients to include children and unvaccinated adults.

Its director, Dr Ferwahn Fairis Ab Karim, said the facility, which commenced operations on Feb 25 and initially dedicated to treating Covid-19 cases in categories 1, 2A and 2B, had adjusted its admission criteria.

"We now include paediatric populations aged 4 and above, as well as unvaccinated patients below 60. Currently, there are more than 130 patients in the facility. They comprise 30 per cent males and 70 per cent females.

"This number reflects the high turnover of patients due to the shorter quarantine period.

"These patients are mainly in category 2B. We have also recently started to accept stable category 3 patients," he told the *New Straits Times*.

He added that admissions into the facility were up to 50 patients daily from the Klang Valley, and that the current 850-bed count was manageable.

Many patients, he said, preferred or could be quarantined at home with the new guidelines issued by the Health Ministry, which saw fewer patients being sent to the facility.

Dr Ferwahn added that the facility had not received Covid-19 patients from other states.

"The ministry has instructed all states to have its own PKRC.

"So far, there is no requirement for us to admit patients from other states," he said.

Asked if there had been incidents of patients deteriorating to advanced stages while being monitored at MAEPS PKRC, Dr Ferwahn said those sent to the facility had been thoroughly screened at the Covid-19 Assessment Centres (CAC).

"Therefore, very few of our patients are transferred out for further management, and it is not due to Covid-19 but rather due to their comorbidities," he said.

The MAEPS PKRC was reopened on Feb 25 amid rising Covid-19 cases and because most hospitals, designated as coronavirus hospitals, had been converted to hybrid hospitals.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin reportedly said the reactivation of MAEPS PKRC was to lessen the burden of overcrowded hospitals, where patients with mild symptoms were warded.

The first day of its reopening saw the first batch of 18 Covid-19 patients arriving, comprising five men and 13 women aged between 18 and 60 from Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

Five days later, the facility was housing 90 patients who were referred by hospitals and CACs, and did not require intensive or procedural treatments.

MAEPS PKRC was first opened in 2020 for about 14 months before it was closed on Feb 8.

Less than three weeks later, however, it was decided that it would be reopened due to the Omicron wave.

Slight dip as 27,004 new Covid-19 cases reported

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia recorded 27,004 new Covid-19 infections on Thursday, which is a slight decrease from Wednesday, bringing the cumulative number of cases to 3,927,437.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said of the new cases, 26,285 were local transmissions (25,196 Malaysians, 1,089 foreigners) and 719 others were imported (676 Malaysians; 43 foreigners).

He said 11,163 (41.34 per cent) of the new infections reported were in Category 1, 15,642 cases (57.92 per cent) in Category 2, 63 (0.23 per cent) in Category 3, 72 cases (0.27 per cent) in Category 4 and 64 (0.24 per cent) in Category 5.

"Of the 199 new cases in Categories 3, 4, and 5 reported on March 17, 51 cases (25.63 per cent) involved unvaccinated or partially vaccinated patients, 82 cases (41.21 per cent) received two vaccine doses but have yet to receive a booster, and 66 cases (33.17 per cent) have received booster doses.

"A total of 95 cases (47.74 per cent) were aged 60 and above; and 105 cases (52.76 per cent) had comorbidities," he said yesterday. Of the total, 995 (59.6 per cent) were Categories 1 and 2; and the remaining 674 (40.4 per cent) were in Categories 3, 4 and 5.

Dr Noor Hisham said 152 of the 373 Covid-19 cases currently being treated at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) were confirmed cases, while 221 others were either suspected, possible or under investigation.

He said 225 of the cases in ICU required ventilator support (97 confirmed cases; 128 either suspected, possible or under investigation).

On Covid-19, there were 296,799 active cases in the country up to yesterday. The country also recorded 29,450 recoveries on Thursday, bringing the cumulative number to 3,596,453 or 91.6 per cent of the overall cases.

On hospital bed occupancy rates, Dr Noor Hisham said ICU

beds in eight states were above 50 per cent.

"Perlis topped the list with 73 per cent, followed by Kuala Lumpur (70 per cent), Putrajaya (67 per cent), Kelantan (63 per cent), Johor (60 per cent), Selangor (56 per cent), Sarawak (52 per cent) and Perak (51 per cent).

"For non-ICU bed usage, 11 states and two federal territories have recorded more than 50 per cent usage, namely Selangor (95 per cent), Kuala Lumpur (92 per cent), Putrajaya (83 per cent), Perlis (79 per cent), Perak (79 per cent), Terengganu (78 per cent), Sarawak (70 per cent), Melaka (68 per cent), Negri Sembilan (62 per cent), Kelantan (60 per cent), Johor (55 per cent), Pahang (54 per cent) and Penang (52 per cent)."

He said none of the reopened Covid-19 Quarantine and Low-Risk Treatment Centres had recorded more than 50 per cent capacity up to yesterday.

Nine new Covid-19 clusters were also detected yesterday, bringing the tally to 6,902. A total of 340 clusters were still active.

He said the national infectivity rate stood at Rt 0.95, with Sarawak the highest at 1.13, followed by Kuala Lumpur (1.10); Terengganu and Negri Sembilan (both at 1.04) and Putrajaya (1.03).

Meanwhile, 1,221,990 children aged 5 to 11 (34.4 per cent) had received the first Covid-19 vaccine dose since the Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) was launched last month.

The Health Ministry's Covid-Now website also reported a total of 2,841,412 adolescents aged 12 to 17 (91.3 per cent) had received two doses, while 2,940,403 or 94.5 per cent had received at least one dose of the vaccine.

Malaysia's Covid-19 death toll stood at 34,185, with 86 more fatalities recorded on Thursday. The ministry reported 35 brought-in-dead cases, bringing the tally to 7,163.



A boy receiving a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at the offsite vaccine delivery centre in Seberang Jaya, Penang, yesterday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : POLITICS/NEWS



Delegates singing the Umno party anthem during the opening of the 2021 Umno General Assembly at the Kuala Lumpur World Trade Centre yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

Khairy: No polls until public health stabilises

KUALA LUMPUR: Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin yesterday poured cold water on Umno's call for the 15th General Election to be held soon, saying that it should be held only when the public health situation has stabilised.

He said since Malaysia would make the transition from the Covid-19 pandemic phase into endemicity on April 1, it was only right to postpone matters that could complicate the recovery process.

"A general election is something that we can postpone until the public health situation has stabilised.

"We will reopen our borders on April 1, so we want to see the outcome of that. The reopening

needs to be done safely so that it does not put pressure on the public health system.

"There will also be more relaxations from April 1 onwards. The Hari Raya festivities will be coming up and people will be going for terawih prayers (during Ramadan)," said Khairy, who is Rembau member of parliament and former Umno Youth chief, at a press conference on the sidelines of the Umno general assembly here.

He was responding to Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's call for GE15 to be

held early since the sentiment of the people was in favour of the party. Zahid also said GE15 would

enable the party to broker a new deal for the people, who are longing for political stability.

Khairy said the Health Ministry wanted to see if the reopening would result in an increase in Covid-19 infections in the next few months.

"We do not know yet if we will have to deal with new Covid-

19 variants, but this is something the ministry is monitoring.

"If we look at the trend in Eu-

ropean countries, infections are going down and up."

Khairy thanked Zahid for leaving the matters on the dissolution of Parliament to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

"He said although the party grassroots wanted to see the general election to be held early, he would leave the matter to the prime minister to decide.

"And I am sure the prime minister will take into consideration several matters.

"Apart from the recovery process, there is the memorandum of understanding (between the government) and the opposition. The prime minister will also seek the views of the Health Ministry on the public health situation of the country."



Khairy Jamaluddin

AKHBAR : THE STAR
 MUKA SURAT : 2
 RUANGAN : NATION

Need for control system

Experts call for a plan to manage future outbreaks

By ALIZA SHAH
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PETALING JAYA: As the nation prepares to transition to the endemic phase from April 1, health experts have advised the government to have a specific Covid-19 control programme to help manage possible future outbreaks.

Former deputy health director-general Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman said like with any other endemic disease such as dengue, malaria or leptospirosis, Covid-19 cases could spike at certain times.

This is described as an "epidemic state of an endemic disease", he said.

"The endemic state means that infections are still occurring in the community and cases will be reported all year round.

"Are we certain we are going into an endemic state after April 1? I am not sure, but will the current Omicron wave end by April 1? Perhaps," he said.

Dr Lokman said it is very important for the healthcare system to be able to monitor cases effectively to detect and manage a potential epidemic.

"Like with dengue - localised epidemics can occur after the rainy season, so at times we must expect the occurrence of outbreaks or epidemics and be prepared to deal with them.

"We must have a Covid-19 control programme in place as we did for dengue and tuberculosis," he added.

"The Health Ministry must develop a long-term strategy to live with Covid-19."

The emergence of new variants should also be managed through effective and comprehensive genomic surveillance.

This, he added, is not something of which we have done enough.

Dr Lokman said focus should also be given to managing symptomatic cases through improved case detection.

"The current numbers of brought in dead (BID) cases are not accept-



Test on arrival: Flight passengers undergoing the rapid antigen swab test for Covid-19 at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang. - AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

able after our experience with the Delta variant from July to September last year.

"We need to also improve our capacity to manage severe cases," he added.

On Thursday, Malaysia recorded 27,004 new cases and 120 deaths, with 35 of the latter being BID cases.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the government needs to inform the public of the possibility of movement control orders being put in place again if the number of cases reaches a certain threshold.

"And it is very important that this threshold level be communicated to the public," she said, adding that Malaysia must also ensure that self-test kits are widely available.

Dr Malina said the government will have to make sure the vaccination rate for booster and coverage among children is at least 70% to 80%.

"On top of that, we have to make sure those who are unable or refuse to be vaccinated are protected as well from any possible infection.

"For example, if their parents have yet to receive their boosters, they should not be allowed to go back to their hometowns - the

unvaccinated should not be allowed to come close to the elderly," she said.

Public health expert Datuk Dr Syed Mohamed Aljunied said our healthcare system is much better than those in other developing countries and we should be ready to move on to the next stage.

However, he said a comprehensive health financing mechanism is needed to provide adequate financial resources for people to access public and private healthcare services.

"As we move to the endemic state, more people will be going to private facilities."

"Currently, whenever we go to private clinics or hospitals, we have to pay for it ourselves, and this is a problem.

"Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand have an additional advantage compared to Malaysia since they have a strong health financing system through their national health insurance that covers Covid-19, too.

"Their people can choose to go to public or private facilities and all will be covered by the insurance health programme - and it is very cheap, too," he said.

Dr Syed Mohamed said this is important to reduce the burden on

public facilities as well as to allow those with "long Covid" to get proper treatment, referring to those suffering from lingering health problems after recovering from the acute phase of the illness.

"The endemic phase will last about five to six years.

"It is a very long process, so the issue is we have almost four million cases and many suffer from long Covid - how are they going to get treatment if we don't have a proper health financing system?"

"Let's say they need to see a psychiatrist - we don't have an adequate number of them in public sector facilities, while the private sector is expensive.

"This will create more issues with mental health," he added.

Dr Syed Mohamed also emphasised the need to improve the Covid-19 surveillance system to help detect any outbreak, including the use of the MySejahtera app.

"The current standard operating procedure (SOP) will soon be relaxed, the public will be given more freedom, the country's borders will be opened to travellers - if the surveillance system is not strengthened, we may not be able to detect any outbreak that might occur during the endemic stage," he warned.

Dr Syed Mohamed also suggested decentralising the decision-making process to the state and district health system in order to efficiently manage Covid-19 cases in the local population.

As at March 17, 83.8% of the total population in Malaysia has received at least one dose and 78.9% has received two doses, but only 46.2% have got the booster shot.

Also, 34.4% of children aged five to 11 had received their first dose, while 94.5% of those aged 12 to 17 have received their first dose and 91.3% have completed their vaccination.

Still, the Health Ministry has constantly stressed the need for older folk to get their boosters as most deaths have occurred among those aged 60 and above.

'Booster' convenience at your fingertips

By N. TRISHA
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PETALING JAYA: The public will be able to pick the date, time and venue of their Covid-19 vaccine booster dose appointments through MySejahtera from Monday.

This is a step forward for the immunisation programme as a way to expedite booster dose dispensing nationwide before the "fully vaccinated" status of certain vaccine recipients is revoked after March 31.

ProtectHealth Corp Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Dr Anas Alam Faizli said he hoped this facility would make it easier for people to receive the booster dose.

"To ensure that the transition to the endemic phase on April 1 can be implemented safely, the focus is to foster community awareness and individual responsibility.

"This will expand access to existing vaccination programmes, especially for senior citizens.

"Unvaccinated or 'unboosted' elderly folk with comorbidities have a higher risk of dying if they contract Covid-19.

"As Ramadan is approaching, I advise everyone to receive their booster dose as quickly as possible.

"We must protect our parents and family as well as increase our protection levels before we transition to the endemic phase," he said yesterday.

Dr Anas said the list of vaccination centres (PPV) will be updated from time to time.

To book your booster dose, go to your MySejahtera application home screen and click on "Covid-19 Vaccination", then select "Click here to book your appointment".

Choose your preferred PPV name and address, then select an available vaccination slot (date and time).

Select "See more" to view the appointment slots and ensure that the details are correct before clicking "Confirm" (i.e. type of vaccine, place of vaccination, date and time of vaccination).

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : NATION

'First priority is Covid-19'

KJ: General election can be held after situation stabilises

KUALA LUMPUR: Stabilising the Covid-19 situation in the country should be prioritised before a general election is held, says Khairy Jamaluddin.

The Health Minister said the country should wait at least a few months after April 1, when Malaysia starts transitioning into the endemic phase.

"The general election is something that we can put on hold first until the public health situation stabilises," he said at a press conference on the sidelines of the Umno general assembly here.

Khairy, who is also Rembau Umno deputy chief, noted the country would be reopening its borders

on April 1, followed by more easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

"There will also be more relaxations from April 1 onwards. We have the Hari Raya festivities coming up. People will congregate for terawih prayers.

"We want to see in the next few months if the reopening results in an increase in Covid-19 infections.

"An increase in Covid-19 cases is okay, but we do not want a hike in hospital admissions," he said.

Khairy said the ministry was also monitoring potential local emergence of the Omicron variant, which had caused the Covid-19 numbers in Europe to rise.

"We do not know if we will have

to deal with new Covid-19 variants but this is something the ministry is monitoring.

"In Europe and the United Kingdom, we saw their infections go down, but it is rising again," he said.

He noted that Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the decision on whether to call for a snap general election was in the hands of Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

"In his presidential address, he pointed out that even though the grassroots want GE15 to be held early, it is up to the Prime Minister. I think it is the right thing to do.

"Surely, the Prime Minister will

consider all views, not just the country's recovery plan, but also the ongoing plans for institutional reforms. I believe he will also hear the views of the Health Ministry on public health concerns," he said.

There have been many calls during the Umno general assembly from leaders and delegates for GE15 to be expedited, even though the current Parliament term only expires in June 2023.

Watch the video
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