

AKHBAR : KOSMO

MUKA SURAT : 12

RUANGAN : NEGARA

Produk timbang kilo laris kerana ingin cantik segera

Kosmetik beracun dapat permintaan

Oleh NUR SYAZWANA MANSOR

SUNGAI PETANI – Produk kosmetik yang mengandungi merkuri dan bahan kimia terlarang akan terus berada di pasaran selagi mendapat permintaan daripada pengguna di negara ini.

Pegawai Penyelidik Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang (CAP), Hatijah Hashim berkata, ada pengguna yang sanggup membeli produk kosmetik luar negara yang diharamkan Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) secara dalam talian kerana percaya dengan keberhasilan produk tersebut.

Katanya, pelbagai hebahan telah dibuat pihak KKM mengenai kesan bahaya produk tersebut, namun masih mendapat permintaan pengguna yang ingin cantik segera.

“Kita (CAP) juga ada menjalankan kajian ke atas puluhan produk kosmetik yang mengandungi merkuri dan bahan kimia berbahaya sejak 1983, terutama krim muka dari Thailand dan Indonesia.

“Bagaimanapun, produk-produk tersebut kini bukan sahaja boleh didapati dari dua negara jiran itu, tetapi juga dari China dan Taiwan yang boleh dibeli secara dalam talian melalui pelbagai platform e-dagang,” katanya ketika dihubungi semalam.

Katanya, hasil ujian ke atas produk itu mengesahkan terdapat kandungan merkuri dan bahan lain yang bertindak sebagai



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peluntur bagi memutihkan kulit.

“Produk ini bukan sahaja bahaya untuk kulit, malah turut boleh merosakkan buah pinggang dan menjejaskan janin bagi wanita hamil,” ujarnya.

Katanya, CAP juga pernah menerima satu aduan pengguna berkaitan produk komestik yang dibeli secara dalam talian dari China kira-kira dua tahun lalu.

“Produk itu tidak mengandungi merkuri, tetapi bahan lain yang memerlukan pengguna memakai secara berterusan dan sekiranya berhenti, menyebabkan kulit mengalami kegatalan dan rosak,” jelasnya.

Justeru, pihaknya menasihatkan pengguna lebih bijak dalam memilih produk kecantikan yang menjanjikan kesan cepat.

“Selain itu, kerajaan melalui Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (MCMC) boleh mengambil tindakan dengan menyekat penjualan produk-produk ini di media sosial dan di platform e-dagang.

“CAP juga kini dalam proses menyiapkan laporan mengenai beberapa produk kecantikan yang telah kami kaji dan mengandungi merkuri serta bahan kimia berbahaya,” jelasnya.

Kosmo! kelmarin melaporkan hanya kerana mendambakan wajah yang halus mulus dan licin bak kulit telur, masih ramai wanita menggunakan produk kecantikan ‘timbang kilo’ meskipun mengetahui produk itu mengandungi pelbagai bahan kimia termasuk merkuri.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

8

NEWS / Nation

HIGHER GDP ALLOCATION NEEDED

TIME TO UP INVESTMENT IN HEALTHCARE

Experts say whoever wins GE15 must see through reforms to provide better services to people

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MALAYSIA provides one of the best healthcare services in Southeast Asia, so much so that the nation's medical tourism has grown rapidly, raking in close to RM1.7 billion in 2019.

The Covid-19 pandemic, however, had exposed the weaknesses in the country's public healthcare system, including an investment that did not commensurate with the burden it bore.

Caretaker Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin had called on the government to consider increasing public health allocation to five per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Malaysia, as a middle-income nation, was allocating 2.59 per cent up to August, which was far lower than the World Health Organisation's recommendation of at least five per cent of a devel-

oping nation's GDP.

Thus, improving public health has become one of the key pledges of political parties in their 15th General Election (GE15) manifestos.

Barisan Nasional (BN), Pakatan Harapan (PH) and Perikatan Nasional (PN) have all pledged to increase public health expenditure to five per cent.

BN is seeking to double the annual public healthcare allocation from RM36 billion to RM77 billion by 2027. PH also aims to increase the expenditure in five years, and PN will do so "in stages".

BN has pledged to construct more specialist hospitals to treat infectious diseases and mental health; increase specialist and subspecialist training opportunities in private hospitals; set up a specialist hospital for women; establish a national subsidy scheme for breast and cervical cancer screening; and, enact an act for elderly care.

PH aims to decriminalise attempted suicide and increase mental health protection through insurance schemes. It also wants to address non-communicable diseases (NCD) and discourage



The newly-opened Cyberjaya Hospital. Up to August, Malaysia has allocated 2.59 per cent of its gross domestic product on public healthcare. BERNAMA PIC

smoking, besides setting up a health commission to monitor the implementation of the National Health Reform Plan.

PN, meanwhile, seeks to expand access to mental health assistance at public health facilities; increase the number of specialists; upgrade district hospitals; expand preventive healthcare, including for NCDs; and, create a holistic system that considers for senior citizens.

Experts told the *New Straits Times* that the government should increase the country's investment in healthcare.

Prominent neurosurgeon Professor Datuk Dr Ahmad Zubaidi of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin described BN's *Pelancaran Pelan Amal dan Usaha* (Padu) manifesto on healthcare as "surprisingly and fairly realistic".

Dr Zubaidi also called for improved public-private partnerships to maximise the reach of healthcare delivery, as well as greater investment to provide elder care and tackling NCDs.

It is estimated that one in five

adult Malaysians is living with diabetes, one in three is living with hypertension, and nearly half are overweight or obese.

A recent report revealed that hospitalisations, medical tests, medications and primary care of NCDs incurred an annual cost RM9.65 billion on taxpayers.

"In the long run, other measures indicated in BN's manifesto, such as constructing more specialist hospitals for specific disciplines, and increasing specialist and subspecialist training opportunities are multi-pronged efforts to ensure quality medical care to fellow Malaysians," Dr Zubaidi said.

Public health expert Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar called for a review and reform of the National Health System.

In order to make the healthcare system resilient, Dr Zainal said the government should look into three critical areas: sustainable financing mechanism; quality service (in terms of human resources, facilities, technology and health crisis preparedness); and improved accessibility to basic healthcare.

Dr Zainal also urged the government to separate the public healthcare management from the Public Service Department so that it could focus on the welfare of healthcare personnel in terms of training, enumeration, career advancement and distribution.

He added that resources should be provided to under-served areas.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said what was important was working with stakeholders towards implementing sustainable healthcare policies with a clear timeline.

"The momentum for health reform should be maintained even after GE15, regardless of who forms the government."

"There must be accountability and transparency. The political coalition voted into office must deliver on all promises made to the people, or manifestos will mean nothing in future."

"The landscape is also changing. People want to see noticeable improvements in the healthcare system and in the services it provides," he said.



Datuk Dr Ahmad Zubaidi Abdul Latif



Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai

3AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 5

RUANGAN : NATION

Be on guard, urge experts

Public reminded Covid-19 still prevalent in GE15 period

PETALING JAYA: With one more week of campaigning to go, election candidates will have to be more vigilant of an unseen enemy.

Covid-19 cases have been teetering in the 2,500 and 4,600 range over the past seven days, leading to health experts cautioning them to be mindful of safety measures to keep infections at bay.

"We expect a rise in cases. However, if the public complies with the health measures, we can control and manage the rise (in infections)," said Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

For comparison, there were less than 2,000 cases a day just last month. And in the Sept 5-Sept 12 week, there were times when there were merely about 1,000 cases.

While there has been no exponential rise in infections since the election season began, health experts have advised politicians and the man-in-the-street to not let their guard down.

Dr Noor Hisham, when contacted, said the ministry is closely monitoring the Covid-19 trend.

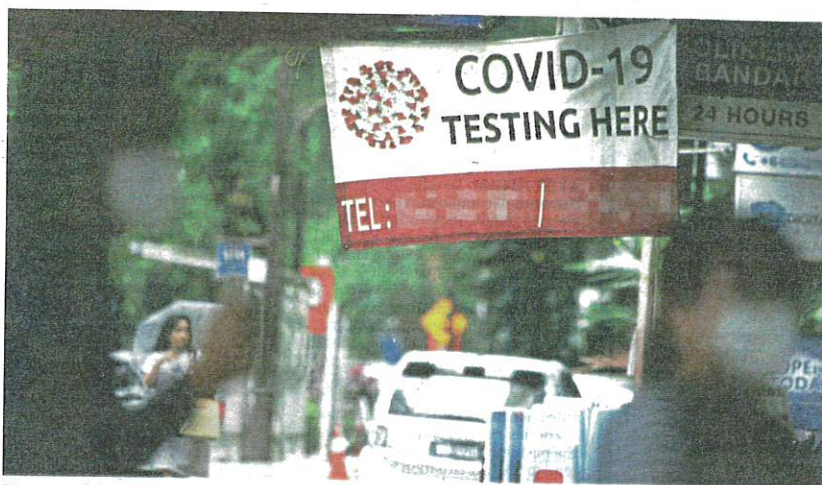
"So far we have not seen an exponential spike. We strongly recommend the public to wear the mask in public places or in confined spaces with poor ventilation, plus frequent hand washing," he said.

"Likewise, after the international borders opened on April 1 and following the Hari Raya celebrations, we predicted a rise in cases in mid-May but that did not happen. The vaccine worked and with a large vaccination coverage, we managed to control the rise," he added.

Among the candidates, Chow Kon Yeow (Batu Kawan), Tan Kar Hing (Gopeng), Fong Kui Lun (Bukit Bintang) and Wong Chai Yi (Simpang Pual) have been infected. Two of Tan's team members caught the virus, too. Some of them have recovered and are back on the campaign trail.

Doctors have raised caution against poor compliance to Covid-19 standard operating procedure during the election campaign. They also called for the Election Commission to announce guidelines for voters down with Covid-19.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai



Not out of the woods: Pedestrians passing by a banner in Bukit Bintang. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star

said cases could rise further if more people do not take precautions, especially when attending crowded events.

"As we have advised before, the use of face masks is highly recommended at this time when many political gatherings are being held nationwide," he said.

However, he noted that though a spike in cases is almost certain, it is difficult to predict the rate of increase as there is freedom of movement and the many political gatherings being held nationwide.

"From our observation, there is an increase in people wearing face masks around town and there is good compliance in places where wearing facemasks are mandatory like on public transportation and in hospitals. But disappointingly, many politicians have not been wearing face masks when meeting the people," he said.

"Our advice is to wear face masks when attending any political event. While a younger person may easily recover from Covid-19, there is always the risk of the virus being spread to someone who may be at high risk of getting severe symptoms, hospitalisation and even

death. We have a responsibility to protect the vulnerable," he added.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia health economics, hospital and health management Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh expects hospitalisation in Categories 3 to 5 to increase by 20% and cases to trend in the 4,000 range as a result of the Nov 5 nomination day and the campaign period which started on the same day.

She said compliance to precautionary measures was still less than satisfactory with people moving around without a face mask, and congregating with a lack of physical distancing.

"Everyone seems to have forgotten that Covid-19 is still around," she said.

Dr Sharifa proposed that voting centres be separated for positive cases, adding that these venues must also have good ventilation and proper spacing.

She also suggested that a new mechanism, such as an e-voting system, be developed especially for those who are warded at hospitals.

Voters and staff at polling booths should be fully vaccinated and boosted, she added.

Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia president Dr Raj Kumar Maharajah is expecting cases to hit beyond the 5,000-6,000 range.

"Hardly any SOP is being followed, as we see ceramah and campaigning taking place," he said.

He advised political parties, candidates and voters to not assume that the pandemic is over, especially in view of the new XBB sub-variant.

If possible, he said political parties should opt for alternatives such as online campaigning instead of physical ceramah. As for physical ceramah, he said it has to be held at open areas such as a field and seats should also be spread out.

Public health advocate and Volunteers For Community Engagement and Empowerment for Covid-19 chairman Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said the number of cases could trend in the 4,000-5,000 range in the next two to three weeks due to the numerous gatherings across the country.

He advised those on the ground to continue taking precautionary measures, get booster shots and avoid public events if they are unwell.