

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 8
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Dr Noor Hisham bersara esok

**Ketua Pengarah
Kesihatan
tamatkan khidmat
lebih tiga dekad
dengan cemerlang**

*oleh Mohd Iskandar Ibrahim
mohd_iskandar@bh.com.my*

Putrajaya: Selepas 35 tahun berkhidmat dalam sektor kesihatan awan negara, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah akan bersara wajib pada Jumaat ini.

Dr Noor Hisham dalam ciapannya di Twitter, menzahirkan persaraannya menerusi beberapa rangkap pantun.

"Kapal layar kemudi cermat, bijak nakhoda melawan gelora; 35 tahun setia berkhidmat, tiba detiknya waktu bersara.

"Langit dan mega luas terbentang, kadangnya cerah yang gelap menanti teruskan berjasa pimpinan mendarang, yang patah tumbuh yang hilang berganti," ciapnya.

Sementara itu, Menteri Kesihatan, Dr Zaliha Mustafa, merakamkan penghargaan kepada Dr Noor Hisham yang bersara wajib Jumaat ini, selepas 35 tahun menabur khidmat dan bakti dalam bidangnya.

Mansuhkan pengkhidmatan

Ahli Parlimen Sekilang itu menyifatkan tempoh pengalaman Dr Noor Hisham amat bermakna dan dimanfaatkan sepenuhnya untuk memabai perkhidmatan kesihatan rakyat Malaysia supaya setanding dengan negara luar.

"Saya percaya khidmat Tan Sri tidak terhenti di sini, bahkan khidmat itu masih diperlukan untuk pembangunan perubatan dan kesihatan negara.

"Saya mewakili pihak Kementerian Kesihatan ingin mengucapkan selamat bersara dan setinggi-tinggi ucapan terima kasih kepada Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham di atas jasa, khidmat bakti dan sumbangan yang beliau sumbangkan sepanjang perkhidmatan di Kementerian ini," katanya dalam perkongsian di Facebook.

Dr Noor Hisham menajwat sebagai Ketua Pengarah sejak



Dr Noor Hisham melambai tangan tanda selamat tinggal pada majlis persaraan beliau yang turut dihadiri Dr Zaliha di Putrajaya, semalam.
(Foto Ihsan Twitter Dr Zaliha Mustafa)

2013 dan sepanjang tempoh lebih tiga dekad dalam perkhidmatan cemerlangnya, beliau antara individu penting ketika negara berdepan krisis kesihatan ketika pandemik COVID-19.

Malah, beliau juga dianggap 'wira' rakyat melalui pencapaian terbaik pasukan kesihatan di bawah pimpinannya dalam memedangi penularan virus itu.

Beliau turut dianggap wajah

penting dalam memberi keyakinan kepada rakyat terutama menerusi usahanya menyalurkan maklumat mengenai COVID-19 sama ada melalui media arus perdana atau di media sosial.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 17
RUANGAN : LOKAL

Tahun ini dijangka parah

Orang ramai dinasihati memakai pelitup muka, payung elak ancaman jerebu dan cuaca panas

Putrajaya

Orang ramai dinasihati agar menggunakan pelitup muka, payung dan topi bagi mengelakkan pendedahan secara langsung terhadap cuaca panas dan jerebu, kata Menteri Kesihatan Dr Zaliha Mustafa.

Beliau berkata mereka juga perlu menghadkan aktiviti fizikal lasak kerana ia boleh meningkatkan risiko penyakit akibat cuaca panas dan jerebu.

"Hadkan masa berada di luar bangunan bagi mengelakkan pendedahan kepada cuaca panas dan jerebu," katanya dalam kenyataan susulan keadaan negara dilanda cuaca panas yang memberi kesan kepada kualiti udara dan suhu ambien di beberapa kawasan.

Menteri Sumber Asli, Alam Sekitar dan Peruba-



Hadkan masa berada di luar bangunan bagi mengelakkan pendedahan kepada cuaca panas dan jerebu"

Dr Zaliha Mustafa.



han Iklim Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad dilaporkan berkata jerebu dijangka lebih serius pada tahun ini berbanding dalam tempoh tiga tahun lepas apabila aktiviti perladangan dan industri kembali beroperasi seperti sedia kala.

Berdasarkan pemantauan status cuaca panas oleh Jabatan Meteorologi (Met-Malaysia) semalam, terdapat beberapa kawasan dilaporkan berada di Tahap Amaran 1 (berjaga-jaga)

dan tiada kawasan dilaporkan berada di Tahap Amaran 2 (gelombang haba).

Dr Zaliha turut meminta orang ramai untuk menutup tingkap bagi mengurangkan partikel jerebu masuk ke dalam rumah atau bangunan.

"Elakkan aktiviti yang boleh meningkatkan pencemaran udara dalam rumah atau bangunan dengan tidak merokok dan sentiasa membersihkan persekitaran dalaman," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 22

RUANGAN : LOKAL



DR Zaliha meratikan majlis persaraan Dr Noor Hisham.



DR Noor Hisham bersama kakitangan Kementerian Kesihatan pada majlis persaraannya.

Dr Noor Hisham bersara selepas 35 tahun tabur bakti

Putrajaya: Menteri Kesihatan, Dr Zaliha Mustafa, merakamkan penghargaan kepada Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah yang bersara wajib Jumaat ini, selepas 35 tahun menabur khidmat dan bakti dalam bidangnya.

Ahli Parlimen Sekijang itu menyifatkan tempoh pengalaman Dr Noor Hisham amat bermakna dan dimanfaatkan sepenuhnya untuk membina perkhidmatan kesihatan rakyat Malaysia supaya setanding negara luar.

"Saya percaya khidmat Tan Sri tidak terhenti di sini, bahkan khidmat terbabit masih diperlukan untuk pembangunan perubatan dan kesihatan negara.

"Saya mewakili pihak Kementerian Kesihatan mengucapkan selamat bersara dan setinggi-tinggi ucapan terima kasih kepada Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham di atas jasa, khidmat bakti dan sumbangan yang disumbangkan sepanjang perkhidmatan di Kementerian ini," katanya menerusi perkongsian di Facebook, kelmarin.

Dr Noor Hisham menjawat sebagai Ketua Pengarah

sejak 2013 dan sepanjang tempoh lebih tiga dekad dalam perkhidmatan cemerlangnya, beliau antara individu penting ketika negara berdepan krisis kesihatan ketika pandemik Covid-19.

Malah, beliau juga dianggap wira rakyat melalui pencapaian terbaik pasukan kesihatan di bawah pimpinannya dalam memerangi penularan virus itu.

Beliau turut dianggap wajah penting dalam memberi keyakinan kepada rakyat terutama menerusi usahanya menyalurkan maklumat mengenai Covid-19 sama ada melalui media arus perdana atau di media sosial.

Sementara itu, Dr Noor Hisham dalam ciapannya di Twitter, menzahirkan persaraannya menerusi beberapa rangkap pantun.

"Kapal layar kemudi cermat, bijak nakhoda melawan gelora, 35 tahun setia berkhidmat, tiba detiknya waktu bersara.

"Langit dan mega luas terbentang, kadangnya cerah gelap menanti, teruskan berjasa pimpinan mendatang, yang patah tumbuh hilang berganti," ciapnya.

“
Saya percaya
khidmat Tan Sri
tidak terhenti
di sini
Dr Zaliha

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 24

RUANGAN : LOKAL

Kes denggi di Pahang naik dua kali ganda

Kuantan: Sebanyak 351 kes demam denggi dilaporkan di Pahang dari 1 Januari hingga 15 April lalu berbanding 115 kes bagi tempoh sama tahun lalu.

Pengarah Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri (JKN) Pahang, Datuk Dr Nor Azimi Yunus berkata, jumlah itu menunjukkan peningkatan 236 kes tahun ini iaitu dua kali ganda berbanding tahun lalu.

Bagaimanapun, katanya, tiada kematian akibat komplikasi demam denggi dilaporkan sehingga kini.

"Daerah Kuantan merekodkan demam denggi tertinggi iaitu 198 kes atau 56.4 peratus, Raub 28 kes (8 peratus), Temerloh 25 kes (7.1 peratus), Bera 24 kes (6.8 peratus) dan Bentong 19 kes (5.4 peratus).

"Maran merekodkan 18 kes (5.1 peratus), Rompin 14 kes (4 peratus), Lipis 10 kes (2.8 peratus), Pekan enam kes (1.7 peratus), Jerantut lima kes (1.4 peratus) dan Cameron Highlands empat

kes (1.1 peratus)," katanya dalam kenyataan semalam.

Dr Nor Azimi berkata, sehingga 15 April lalu, daripada 747,237 bekas diperiksa, 1,338 bekas mengandungi jentik-jentik nyamuk Aedes.

"Semua bekas ini diletakkan bahan pembunuh jentik-jentik atau dilupuskan.

"Di samping itu, 104,607 premis yang berpotensi membiak jentik-jentik nyamuk Aedes diletakkan bahan pembunuh jentik-jentik.

"Manakala, 126,371 premis dibuat semburan kabus bagi membunuh nyamuk dewasa," katanya.

Bagi mencegah peningkatan berterusan kes dan wabak demam denggi, beliau meminta semua individu melaksanakan aktiviti cari dan musnah tempat yang boleh menampung air dan berpotensi pembiakan nyamuk Aedes sekurang-kurangnya 10 minit setiap minggu.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NEGARA

‘Terima kasih Dr. Noor Hisham, 35 tahun yang cemerlang’



NOOR HISHAM berswafoto bersama Zaliha dan warga KKM di ibu pejabat KKM, Putrajaya kelmarin.

PUTRAJAYA – Terima kasih atas sumbangan dan khidmat bakti selama 35 tahun dalam Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM).

Itu penghargaan diberikan Menteri Kesihatan, Dr. Zaliha Mustafa kepada Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullahi yang bersara wajib hari ini.

Dr. Zaliha berkata, terlalu banyak penglibatan dan pencapaian Dr. Noor Hisham dalam sektor perubahan sama ada di dalam negara mahupun di peringkat global.

“Tempoh 35 tahun perkhidmatan yang begitu bermakna dan dimanfaatkan sepenuhnya untuk membina perkhidmatan kesihatan rakyat Malaysia agar setanding dengan negara luar.

“Saya percaya khidmat beliau tidak terhenti di sini bahkan khidmat tersebut masih diperlukan untuk pembangunan perubahan dan kesihatan negara.

“Saya mewakili Kementerian Kesihatan ingin mengucapkan selamat bersara dan setinggi-tinggi ucapan terima kasih Dr. Noor Hisham,” katanya menerusi hantaran di Facebook semalam.

Majlis meraikan persaraan Dr.

Noor Hisham berlangsung di Ibu Pejabat KKM kelmarin.

Sementara itu, Dr. Noor Hisham menerusi hantaran di Facebook turut berkongsi beberapa rangkap pantun sempena persaraannya.

“Kapal layar kemudi cermat, bijak nakhoda melawan gelora; 35 tahun setia berkhidmat, tiba detiknya waktu bersara.

“Langit dan mega luas terbentang, kadangnya cerah yang gelap menanti teruskan berjasa pimpinan mendatang, yang patah tumbuh yang hilang berganti,” katanya.

Dr. Noor Hisham menutup tirai perkhidmatan bersama KKM apabila mengetip perakam waktu (clock out) terakhir di pejabatnya petang semalam.

Dr. Noor Hisham adalah antara watak utama negara dalam berdepan situasi pandemik Covid-19 yang melanda Malaysia sejak 2020 hingga 2021.

Bagaimanapun, soal pengganti Dr. Noor Hisham sebagai Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan yang baharu belum kedengaran dan mungkin akan diumumkan dalam masa terdekat.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Jerebu: Menteri saran guna pelitup muka, payung dan topi

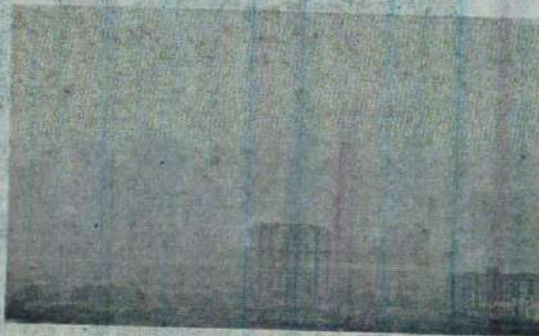
PUTRAJAYA - Orang ramai dinasihatkan agar menggunakan pelitup muka, payung dan topi bagi mengelakkan pendedahan secara langsung terhadap cuaca panas dan jerebu.

Menteri Kesihatan, Dr Zaliha Mustafa berkata, mereka juga perlu mengelakkan aktiviti fizikal lasak kerana ia boleh meningkatkan risiko penyakit.

"Hadkan masa berada di luar bangunan bagi mengelak pendedahan kepada cuaca panas dan jerebu," katanya dalam kenyataan.

Menteri Sumber Asli, Alam Sekitar dan Perubahan Iklim, Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad dilaporkan berkata, jerebu dijangka lebih serius pada tahun ini berbanding dalam tempoh tiga tahun lepas apabila aktiviti perladangan dan industri kembali beroperasi seperti sedia kala.

Berdasarkan pemantauan status cuaca panas oleh Jabatan Meteorologi (MetMalaysia) semalam, beberapa kawasan dilaporkan berada di Tahap Amaran 1 (berjaga-jaga) dan tiada kawasan di Tahap Amaran 2 (gelom-



Jerebu dijangka lebih serius pada tahun ini.



DR ZALIHA

bang haba).

Dr Zaliha turut meminta orang ramai untuk menutup tingkap bagi mengurangkan partikel jerebu masuk ke dalam rumah atau bangunan.

"Elakkan aktiviti yang meningkatkan pencemaran udara dalam rumah atau bangunan dengan tidak merokok dan sentiasa membersihkan persekitaran," katanya.

Beliau berkata, langkah pencegahan lain bagi mengurangkan kesan ke atas kesihatan susulan cuaca panas dan jerebu adalah penggunaan penyaman udara dengan memilih operasi (mode) kitaran udara dalaman semasa memandu kenderaan.

"Banyakkan minum air kosong walaupun tidak terasa dahaga sekurang-kurangnya lapan gelas sehari. Ini bagi mengekalkan tahap hidrasi badan sebagai pengawalatur suhu badan." - *Bernama*

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 9
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Dr Noor Hisham mahu rehat



Dr Noor Hisham ditemui selepas mengimbas kad perakam waktu pada hari terakhir bertugas di KKM Putrajaya pada Rabu.

PUTRAJAYA--"Rehat dulu," kata Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah ketika ditanya mengenai perancangannya selepas bersara wajib, Jumaat ini.

Menurutnya, tarikh persaraan ini antara yang dinantikan selepas mencurahkan bakti selama 35 tahun terhadap negara.

Apatah lagi ketika negara berdepan dengan krisis kesihatan akibat pandemik Covid-19 beberapa tahun lalu yang menyaksikan beliau memimpin Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) dalam keadaan politik negara turut bergolak.

"Alhamdulillah, semuanya berjalan dengan lancar, Covid-19 pun sudah dapat dikawal dengan baik," katanya ringkas ketika ditemui selepas mengimbas kad perakam waktu di lobi KKM di sini pada Rabu.

Sebelum beredar, Dr Noor Hisham turut menyapa petugas media yang menantikannya.

Turut hadir mengiringi, Menteri Kesihatan, Dr Zaliha Mustafa dan Timbalannya, Lukanisman Awang Sauni.

Dr Noor Hisham menjawat sebagai Ketua Pengarah sejak 2013 selepas enam tahun memegang jawatan Timbalan Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 27
RUANGAN : NEGERI

Kes demam denggi di Pahang meningkat

KUANTAN - Pahang merekodkan 351 kes demam denggi dalam tempoh Januari sehingga 15 April tahun ini, peningkatan 236 kes berbanding 115 kes yang direkodkan dalam tempoh sama tahun lalu.

Pengarah Kesihatan Negeri Pahang, Datuk Indera Dr Nor Azimi Yunus berkata, tiada kematian dilaporkan akibat komplikasi demam denggi sehingga kini.

Menurutnya, Kuantan melaporkan kes demam denggi tertinggi dengan 198 kes (56.4 peratus) diikuti Raub 28 kes (8 peratus), Temerloh 25 kes (7.1 peratus), Bera 24 kes (6.8 peratus), Bentong 19 kes (5.4 peratus), Maran 18 kes (5.1 peratus), Rompin 14 kes (4 peratus), Lipis 10 kes (2.8 peratus), Pekan 6 kes (1.7 peratus), Jerantut 5 kes (1.4 peratus) dan Cameron Highlands 4 kes (1.1 peratus).

"Lokaliti wabak demam denggi juga dilaporkan meningkat 320 peratus dari lima lokaliti dalam tempoh itu tahun lalu kepada 21 lokaliti tahun ini.

"Daripada keseluruhan lokaliti itu, 19 lokaliti wabak Kuantan dan satu lokaliti masing-masing di Raub dan Temerloh.

"Sembilan lokaliti wabak dikesan masih aktif di Kuantan," katanya melalui satu kenyataan pada Rabu.

Nor Azimi berkata, daripada 747,237 bekas yang diperiksa sehingga 15 April lalu, 1,338 bekas yang ditemui kehadiran jentik-jentik nyamuk Aedes diletakkan bahan pembunuh jentik-jentik atau dilupuskan.

"Sebanyak 104,607 premis yang berpotensi membiak jentik-jentik nyamuk aedes telah diletakkan bahan pembunuh jentik-jentik manakala 126,371 premis dilakukan semburan kabus bagi membunuh nyamuk dewasa," katanya.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 8
RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

35 YEARS OF SERVICE

FAREWELL CEREMONY FIT FOR A 'HERO'

Dr Noor Hisham retires from his post as Health D-G tomorrow

HANA NAZ HARUN
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

HEALTH director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah will bid farewell to his post tomorrow after serving 35 years in the country's public healthcare.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Dr Noor Hisham expressed his feelings with a few verses of a Malay *pantun*.

"Kapal layar kemudi cermat, bijak nakhoda melawan gelora, 35 tahun setia berkhidmat, tiba detiknya waktu bersara.

"Langit dan mega luas terben-

tang, kadangnya cerah yang gelap menanti, teruskan berjasa pimpinan mendatang, yang patah tumbuh yang hilang berganti."

He also shared several photographs of his retirement ceremony held at the Health Ministry on Tuesday.

Dr Noor Hisham held the post as Health director-general since 2013, and was one of the key leaders in managing the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

He was also dubbed a "hero" by many for his excellent leadership throughout the crisis and was considered to be an important figure in giving updates on the



Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah taking pictures with Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa and ministry staff at his retirement ceremony held on Tuesday. PIC FROM FACEBOOK

Covid-19 situation.

Many well-wishers in their reply to his tweet thanked him for his service and hard work, with some even taking the time to reply to his *pantun*.

Twitter user Si Pitung (@ali_kunji) said: *"Kapal layar selamat berlabuh, jangan lupa tali ditambah, jasa dan bakti akan tetap tumbuh, sudah waktunya untuk berehat."*

"Pokok selasih tumbuhnya subur, banyak terdapat di tepi bendang, terima kasih dan selamat berundur, jasmu tetap kami kenang."

Another Twitter user, Zil Faillah, also took the opportunity

to express her gratitude for his exemplary work, and shared a verse of a *pantun*.

"Happy retirement Dr Noor Hisham and thank you for your outstanding service."

"Panjang sungguh jabatan Pulau Pinang, sempat berhenti di Tanjung Uban, jasa Tan Sri tetap dikenang, semoga diberkati ditredhat Tuhan."

Meanwhile, Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa took to Facebook and paid tribute to Dr Noor Hisham, praising him for his contributions to public healthcare.

She said Dr Noor Hisham had 35 years of meaningful service

with various involvements and achievements both domestically and globally.

His long commitment to his work, she added, was fully utilised to bring Malaysia's healthcare service to be on a par with foreign countries.

"I believe your service will not end here. In fact, it is still needed for the country's medicine and health development."

"On behalf of the Health Ministry, I would like to wish you happy retirement and I express my deepest gratitude to you for your service, devotion and contribution throughout your work in the ministry."

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 10
RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

XBB.1.16

'No need to raise alarm over newest Omicron subvariant'

AUDREY DERMAWAN
GEORGE TOWN
audreymd@nst.com.my

THERE is no need to raise the alarm over the newest Omicron XBB subvariant, XBB.1.16 (also known as Arcturus), despite cases being reported in several states, said Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) virologist Dr Kumitaa Theva Das.

She explained that based on current evidence, there was no need for panic as long as Malaysians continued adhering to practices to keep themselves and those around them safe.

This is despite a pre-print by Japan indicating that XBB.1.16 was 1.2 times more transmissible than the XBB.1.5 (previously thought to be more transmissible).

She said this might explain why Malaysia was seeing an increase in cases.

"Over the past 14 days, all states have seen an increase in cases,

ranging from a 23.9 per cent hike in Johor, to 355.4 per cent in Kelantan. Kuala Lumpur and Selangor recorded more than 1,000 cases respectively in the period.

"However, there does not seem to be an increase in deaths, suggesting that the new variant isn't more severe," she told the *New Straits Times*, adding that that new variants being detected meant that proper genomic surveillance was in place.

XBB.1.16 was first detected in Malaysia from late February to early March, and had been reported in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Negri Sembilan, Perak, Selangor and Terengganu.

XBB.1.5 — the most prevalent strain globally — was first detected in Malaysia late last year and had been found in all states since, and XBB.1.9 was also first recorded

in Malaysia around the same time.

The new variant has been found in more than 20 countries, but only India is showing signs of a wave.

Elaborating, Dr Kumitaa, who is also USM's Infectomics Cluster, Advanced Medical and Dental Institute senior lecturer, said it did not seem like Malaysia had entered a new wave, despite the uptrend, as there was no exponential growth yet.

"The trends and practices during Hari Raya will determine if it becomes a wave or not."

She said Malaysia had been seeing a slow rise in cases since early March, when the country was averaging close to 200 cases daily, to a little more than 700 cases daily now in the span of

six weeks.

She said, while Malaysia's numbers were not as high as Singapore and India, the country should still be extra cautious.

"We have done exceptionally well in fighting Covid-19. That is also why, despite other countries seeing a spike in cases and new waves every few months, we have not seen one since the Delta wave and after our high vaccination uptake here in Malaysia.

"However, all it takes is for one person to be infected to spread the new variant from state to state, or from country to country.

"A recent study by Hong-Kong showed that in unvaccinated individuals, variants of concern, including Omicron, undergo a high mutation rate, which leads to new variants. This is not seen in vaccinated individuals.

"As long as there are unvaccinated individuals, there will always be a possibility of new variants."

Asked on whether there was a need for a fresh round of booster

doses, she noted that the people who benefitted the most from another round would be the elderly and high-risk individuals (those with co-morbidities or are immunocompromised).

Meanwhile, Dr Kumitaa said, the United States currently had Project Next Gen in the pipeline which is aimed at accelerating the development of vaccines, including vaccines that produced mucosal immunity and pan-coronavirus vaccines that would safeguard against new SARS-CoV-2 variants.

On Tuesday, Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa said there was no need to panic as the number of Covid-19 cases in the country was still under control.

She said that the number of deaths due to Covid-19 was also still low, mostly involving the elderly and individuals with co-morbidities.

Dr Zaliha had also advised members of the public to wear face masks if they experienced any symptoms.



Dr Kumitaa Theva Das

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : NATION

'Take cover from virus, air pollution'

Health experts say it is vital to mask up to get the necessary double protection

By JUNAID IBRAHIM
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Face masks now serve a dual purpose, protecting oneself from Covid-19 and also the haze that has been blanketing the country the past week, say experts.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh is advising the public to continue masking up, especially the elderly and children, to protect them from the harmful effects of the haze.

She said the air pollution consists of fine particles that could enter the human body through the respiratory system and cause health problems.

"The fine particles can go into our breathing system through our throat and lungs, which may cause health issues such as bron-

chitis. It could also settle on the skin and eyes, which can cause irritation," the professor and public health expert said.

As Hari Raya Aidilfitri approaches, Prof Sharifa said the public should try to reduce outdoor activities.

"It is important to wear a face mask when outside, especially an N95 that could block fine particles.

"Haze is always related to extreme heat that could lead to heat stroke; hence, staying hydrated is also the best way to ensure good health conditions," she said.

Prof Sharifa also said that setting up air purifiers in the house would also help ensure the indoor air is free of pollutants.

She also said that before visiting an area during Hari Raya, the public are advised to check the air

pollution index (API) of the location.

"If the area records bad API readings, then, if possible, avoid going there," she said.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai concurred, saying that the public must stay informed about the haze and take heed of any warnings or advice from the authorities.

"Face masks will indeed serve a dual purpose if the haze is still around during the Aidilfitri holidays.

"It will also be important to stay hydrated as the heat can cause dryness of the throat and eyes," he said.

To continuously ensure Covid-19 can be contained, Dr Muruga also said the public must wear face masks when visiting houses where there are vulnerable

groups, such as the elderly.

"Those with an existing respiratory illness will need to take extra care to avoid exposure to both the haze and Covid-19.

"Whether it's the haze or Covid-19, if you're having trouble breathing, you should go to the emergency department of a hospital immediately," he added.

Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa has advised the public to take precautionary measures as the haze situation is expected to worsen, with air quality dropping in several areas of the country.

"People should limit physical activities during the hot weather that could lead to illness.

"Limit being outdoors, use suitable face masks and protect yourselves from the haze by using umbrellas and caps to prevent direct exposure to the hot

weather," she said in a statement yesterday.

She urged the public to halt activities that would lead to air pollution, such as smoking, and to drink more warm water (at least eight glasses) to prevent dehydration.

According to a Swiss air quality index (AQI) monitoring company, a monitoring station in Kuala Lumpur recently recorded an unhealthy air quality of 117.

However, as of yesterday afternoon, almost all 68 air pollution index (API) stations in the country showed moderate readings below 100.

The website also forecast that the AQI in Kuala Lumpur on Friday (April 21) and Saturday (April 22), when Hari Raya Aidilfitri is expected, would be moderate, with readings of 80 or higher.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NATION

It's getting harder to breathe

More seeking medical attention for respiratory issues as the air gets murkier

By N. TRISHA
trishang@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: The number of people seeking medical attention for respiratory issues has gone up as the haze gets worse.

Medical professionals said there were more people seeking treatment in hospitals for sudden asthma attacks, wheezing, breathlessness and allergic rhinitis in the past two weeks.

Internal medicine consultant Dr Evelyn Chan said they were suffering from coughing, wheezing and feeling breathless.

"Those with underlying health issues like asthma are advised to keep their inhalers with them at all times.

"We also advise people to take the flu jab and stay indoors.

"Mask up if you have to go out and it is important to drink more water to keep hydrated," she said.

Consultant otorhinolaryngologist Dr Sow Yih Liang said there had been a slight increase in patients with nose allergies.

He said there were those who came in with allergic rhinitis, which is quite similar to asthma but it has to do with the nose.

(Allergic rhinitis is a type of inflammation in the nose that occurs when the immune system overreacts to allergens in the air.)

"It is a common allergy that results in sneezing and a runny nose. This happens when there is haze and it triggers hypersensitivity in the nose.

"Some come in with a cough as well, and it is all interconnected.

"The dry particulates enter through the nose and then cause



Diminishing visibility: Visitors walking along the Esplanade as the North Butterworth Container Terminal is shrouded in a blanket of haze in George Town. — K.T. GOH/The Star

inflammation. When people breathe through the mouth, they develop a cough.

"When it comes to haze, those affected are across the board. With allergic rhinitis, it usually affects young people, teenagers and children.

"We do recommend a sinus cleanse (sinus flush)," he added.

Dr Sow, who is also a head and neck surgeon, said there will be an influx of patients when there is haze but the number has come

down as many people have been wearing face masks since the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Face masks work as a filter and we encourage the public to wear them outdoors, especially those with allergic rhinitis," he said.

Meanwhile, it is business as usual for tourism in the state despite the haze.

Penang Tourist Guides Association president Chin Poh Chin said tours are planned way ahead,

usually weeks or months in advance.

"Only local tourists coming on their own will cancel or postpone tours. Even that is very rare.

"We have minimal cancellations and, on our part, we will advise our guides and guests to wear face masks and drink more water when there is haze," she said.

Air Pollutant Index (API) readings in the state have been leaning towards unhealthy levels, and

the odour of smoke hangs over the air.

The API readings on Tuesday evening were Balik Pulau (126), Batu Uban (155) and Tanjung Bungah (103), falling under the "unhealthy" category.

The mainland shows a reading of between 126 and 148.

In Kedah, air quality was between 151 and 156.

An API reading of between 0 and 50 is good, while 51 to 100 is moderate, 101 to 200 is unhealthy, 201 to 300 very unhealthy and above 301 is deemed hazardous.

On Monday, the air quality in Penang plummeted as the API of one meteorological station showed that the API was at an unhealthy level of 145.

According to the Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC) website, there were no hotspots with substantial open burning in Malaysia and only a single hotspot was detected in Sumatra.

However, satellites have registered hundreds of hotspots spread across millions of hectares in eastern Myanmar and throughout Laos.

It is believed that these hotspots are the result of farmers practising traditional slash-and-burn farming, which entails large swathes of jungle being cleared and then burned to enrich the soil with potassium and phosphate while killing pests.

On Saturday, Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said the nation was bracing for the return of the haze due to the recent hot and dry conditions.

Mask up against Covid-19 and haze, says exco man

By YEE XIANG YUN
xiangyun@thestar.com.my

AYER HITAM: It would be wise for people, especially those with respiratory problems, to mask up against the double whammy of haze and Covid-19, says Johor's health committee chairman.

Ling Tian Soon said while there was no significant rise in hospitalisations in the past few days, the public should not let up on their precautionary measures.

"The state Health Department is on high alert and has instructed all government hospitals to be ready for a possible increase in patients due to the haze.

"In Johor, only Segamat has recorded unhealthy Air Pollutant Index (API) readings in the past few days, but we want to remain vigilant," he said when asked to comment yesterday.

Ling, also the Yong Peng assemblyman, earlier attended a Hari Raya Aidilfitri aid distribution programme for mosques, surau and the less fortunate with Ayer Hitam MP Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

On Sunday, Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa posted a TikTok video showing the hazy conditions in Sekijang, Segamat, where visibility was less than 200m.

Meanwhile, asked whether Hospital Segamat was ready to cater to the number



Protected: People wearing face masks while shopping for Hari Raya on a hot and hazy day in Kuala Lumpur. Inset: Ling. — AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

of patients in the event that the haze worsens, Ling said the hospital launched its new wing last month.

"The wing, which includes an emergency and trauma department, should be able to meet patient demand as the medical staff have familiarised themselves with the new equipment and environment.

"Only if the patient needs specialist treatment will they be referred to Hospital Muar," he added.

With Singapore seeing an increase in

daily Covid-19 infections from about 1,400 a month ago to about 4,000 cases a day last week, Ling also advised people to cut down on outdoor activities and wear a mask when they go to crowded places.

"One can never be too careful in view of the newer Covid-19 sub-lineages including XBB.1.16 (also called Arcturus) recently detected in several countries.

"Those who have respiratory problems or are from vulnerable groups are advised to mask up," he added.

Pharmacies sell more masks, flu medication

By SARBAN SINGH
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

SEREMBAN: Pharmacies are seeing more people come in to buy face masks and medication for cough and flu, with the Air Pollutant Index (API) reading in Negri Sembilan hovering at moderate levels.

Some clinics are also seeing a slight increase in the number of patients with the flu and cough.

State health committee chairman S. Veerapan said the situation is under control and there has been no sharp increase in people seeking treatment for illnesses related to unhealthy air quality.

"There is no panic buying for face masks," he said.

An employee at a pharmacy in town said there had been a slight increase in the number of people buying face masks.

"With the number of Covid-19 cases registering an increase, some people may just be taking precautions," she said.

Gurdwara Sahib Seremban secretary M. Gurbachan Singh said the committee had sent texts to worshippers asking them to wear face masks when they attend programmes in the temple.

"For now, this is only a request. We hope they will adhere to this at all times when in the gurdwara premises," he said, adding that programmes are usually held during the weekends.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 13

RUANGAN : VIEWS

Farewell to our Covid warrior

Dr Noor Hisham clocks out after 35 years of health service

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
mazwin@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, the man who played a crucial role during the Covid-19 pandemic, has called it a day after having served the country for 35 years.

He clocked out at the Health Ministry around 4.20pm yesterday.

Dr Noor Hisham, who turns 60 tomorrow, was a picture of calm and was all smiles as ministry staff gathered at the lobby to bid him farewell.

Asked on his post-retirement plans, he said he would want to take a rest.

"I want to rest first. I have been working for a long time," he smiled. He thanked ministry staff for their assistance throughout his 10-year tenure as director-general.

Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa paid tribute to Dr Noor Hisham, saying his involvement and achievements in both domestic and international platforms were used to build better health services for the people.

"I believe that Tan Sri's services will not stop here. In fact, his ser-



Pandemic hero:

Dr Noor Hisham (left) leaving the Health Ministry premises in Putrajaya following his retirement. With him is Dr Zaliha (pink scarf).
— Bernama

vices are still needed for the country's health and medical development," she posted on Facebook.

The minister also wished Dr Noor Hisham the best on his retirement.

"On behalf of the ministry and staff, I express our deepest gratitude to Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham for his services and contributions," said Dr Zaliha.

Having led Malaysia's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr Noor Hisham is well remembered for helping to steer the nation out of the health crisis that crippled much of the world since 2020.

He succeeded Datuk Seri Dr Hasan Abdul Rahman as health director-general on March 1, 2013.

Prior to that, he had held the

post of deputy health director-general (medicine) since Feb 1, 2008.

He graduated with a Master's degree in surgery and a Doctor of Medicine degree from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia before continuing his studies in the field of endocrine surgery and training at several universities in Adelaide and Sydney, Australia.

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

Mask up, limit outdoor activities, says minister

PUTRAJAYA: The public is advised to use face masks and umbrellas or hats to avoid direct exposure to the sun and haze currently affecting the country, said Health Minister Dr. Zaliha Mustafa.

She said people should avoid strenuous activities to prevent illnesses during the current hot spell.

"Limit the time spent outdoors to avoid exposure to the hot weather and haze," she said in a statement yesterday.

Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad was reported to have said that the haze is expected to be worse this year compared with the last three years as plantation and industrial activities have returned to normal operations.

Based on the monitoring of the hot weather status by the Malaysian Meteorological Department yesterday, several areas were reported to be in the Warning Level 1 (Caution) category but no areas were reported to be in Warning Level 2 (heat wave).

Zaliha urged the public to keep windows closed to prevent haze particles from entering their homes or buildings.

"Avoid activities such as smoking that can increase indoor air pollutants and clean the inside of premises regularly."

She said another preventive measure to reduce the ill effects of hot weather and haze is choosing the air-recirculation mode when using air-conditioners while driving.

"Drink lots of plain water, at least eight glasses per day, even if you do not feel thirsty. This is to maintain the body's hydration level, which is important in regulating body temperature."

"Take frequent baths to cool down. Avoid wearing thick, tight and dark-coloured clothes," she said, adding that people should seek immediate treatment at the nearest health facility if they feel unwell. - Bernama