

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

Tidak ambil dos penggalak punca kes Covid-19 naik

PETALING JAYA: Pengambilan dos penggalak vaksin Covid-19 yang tidak mendapat sambutan dalam kalangan rakyat menjadi antara faktor peningkatan kes penyakit itu di Malaysia kebelakangan ini.

Data sehingga 11 April 2023 menunjukkan, hanya 50 peratus iaitu 16,325,561 penduduk Malaysia mengambil dos penggalak pertama manakala hanya 2.5 peratus iaitu seramai 818,420 sahaja menerima suntikan dos penggalak kedua.

Berikutan sambutan yang dingin itu, kadar keberkesanan atau imuniti dos penggalak pertama semakin berkurang sekali-gus menjadi antara faktor peningkatan kes Covid-19.

Pakar Kesihatan Komuniti Fakulti Perubatan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Prof. Dr. Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh berkata, tidak ramai rakyat Malaysia mengambil dos penggalak terutama dos penggalak kedua selepas melihat keadaan kelihatan semakin pulih dan kembali seperti biasa.

"Justeru, memang ada kemungkinan keberkesanan vaksin itu semakin berkurang selepas lebih enam bulan pengambilan



SAMBUTAN dingin terhadap dos penggalak vaksin Covid-19 menjadi antara punca peningkatan kes jangkitan penyakit itu akhir-akhir ini.

dos terakhir.

"Bagaimanapun, saya tidak anggap ini sebagai indikasi untuk Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) dikuatkuasakan semula. Kita hanya perlu terus mengikut prosedur operasi standard (SOP)," katanya ketika dihubungi *Utusan*

Malaysia.

Menurut Wan Sharifa, kebimbangan beliau adalah melibatkan golongan yang berisiko kerana mempunyai antibodi yang lemah. "Individu-individu yang berisiko patut mempertimbangkan pengambilan dos penggalak ke-



Berikutan sambutan yang dingin itu, kadar keberkesanan atau imuniti dos penggalak pertama semakin berkurang sekali-gus menjadi antara faktor peningkatan kes Covid-19."

dua. Mereka ini berisiko mendapat komplikasi sekiranya dijangkiti Covid-19.

"Terbaharu, kita dapat tahu, varian Omicron itu mampu bermutasi dan mengelak antibodi kita dan membuatkan simptom yang dialami lebih teruk dan bahaya," katanya.

Pada 13 April lalu, Menteri Kesihatan, Dr. Zaliha Mustafa mengumumkan bermula awal bulan ini jumlah kemasukan pesakit Covid-19 ke hospital meningkat

sebanyak 17.6% berbanding Mac lalu.

Beliau menggalakkan orang ramai terutama individu berisiko tinggi mendapatkan dos penggalak kedua disebabkan berlaku penurunan imuniti dalam tempoh tiga hingga enam bulan selepas daripada dos terakhir diambil.

Sementara itu, Presiden Persekutuan Hospital Swasta Malaysia, Dr. Kuljit Singh berkata, walaupun terdapat peningkatan, kes-kes Covid-19 itu tidak serius dan tidak melibatkan kemasukan ke unit rawatan rapi (ICU) dalam jumlah besar.

"Peningkatan kes ini berlaku kerana lebih ramai kini yang tidak lagi mengikut SOP terutama memakai pelitup muka di kawasan tertutup.

"Ini bukanlah satu kesalahan tetapi menjelang Aidilfitri ini, ada baiknya untuk mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga.

"Kita ada ubat paxlovid untuk merawat Covid-19 tetapi ia diberikan mengikut kesesuaian pakar juga. Walaupun ada ubat ini, kita tidak boleh sambil lewa dalam menjaga keselamatan diri," katanya.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NEWS / NATION

MEDICAL PROGRAMMES

Student group: Axing scholarship will affect country's healthcare quality

KUALA LUMPUR: A non-governmental organisation led by medical students has urged the Public Service Department (PSD) to review its decision to halt scholarships for students pursuing medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing and para-medical pro-

grammes this year.

Malaysian Medics International (MMI) in a statement said the decision would impact the future of the country's healthcare sector by diminishing the interest of students to pursue medical programmes.

It said the decision to discontinue sponsoring students in local universities intending to study medical programmes was made suddenly and without any explanation.

"MMI urges the PSD to provide more information by disclosing the rationale behind the decision to the public.

"For some, they may have been discouraged and dissuaded from pursuing healthcare professions as this scholarship may have been their only means of funding," it said.

In the long run, this might compromise the quality of healthcare professionals as potential candidates might be deterred due to financial constraints, it said.

MMI also requested for PSD to provide insights and details on its projection of healthcare professionals in the next five years.

This, they said, would allow

policymakers to review policies on human resource planning and tailor them to current healthcare needs while taking population growth into consideration.

"The shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly specialists, in our country remains a pressing issue that has yet to be adequately addressed.

"Despite recommendations in the 11th Malaysia Plan to achieve a 1:400 doctor-to-patient ratio in public healthcare facilities; this target has not yet been met," read the statement.

MMI also highlighted Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa's par-

liamentary written reply last month.

"Data from the Health Ministry indicated that only 62 per cent of house officer positions have been filled, which is attributed to house officers not completing their training, some resigning from their posts or were terminated.

"Therefore, a drop in qualified and skilled healthcare professionals in the future can be anticipated with the stopping of the scholarship.

"We urge the PSD to take immediate consideration of the aforementioned issues and review the decision of scholarship suspension."

Therefore, a drop in qualified and skilled healthcare professionals in the future can be anticipated with the stopping of the scholarship.

MALAYSIAN MEDICS INTERNATIONAL

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

HIGHLY ADDICTIVE

ANTI-VAPING DRIVE STARTS

CAP kicks off campaign to keep kids nicotine-free

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THE Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) has initiated a campaign to keep children nicotine-free, particularly in discouraging the use of e-cigarettes.

CAP education officer N.V. Subbarow said Malaysians should join hands to protect children from smokers and those who vaped, because the smoke and vapour they exhaled could harm minors.

He said children, teenagers and

young adults who used e-cigarettes were also endangering their health, as most of the vaping liquid contained nicotine.

"Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm brain development in adolescents, which continues from the early to mid-20s.

"E-cigarettes also contain other harmful substances besides nicotine.

"Children and teenagers can become addicted to the nicotine in vaping devices and e-cigarettes, as the flavours in the vaping liquid make the

habit more appealing."

Subbarow said flavours such as chewing gum, fruits and sweets could attract children to try e-cigarettes.

"The main reason young people vape or use e-cigarettes is because they like the flavour.

"The majority of parents smoke e-cigarettes at home and in the car, and this trend is worrying.

"Using nicotine during adolescence can harm

parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood and impulse.

"It also increases the risk of future addiction to other drugs.

"So youth and children should avoid the use of products containing nicotine, including e-cigarettes."

Public health groups had raised concern about Malaysian children falling into nicotine addiction, as even children could theoretically buy and consume nicotine-laced products after nicotine was removed from the Poisons List.

Malaysian Council for Tobacco Control chairman Dr M. Muralitharan said nicotine was no longer governed by any act, including the Food Act 1983, which meant children could have access to it at all times.

This, he said, had raised concern about who would be responsible in overseeing the sale and consumption of nicotine.



N.V. Subbarow

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NATION

4 Nation

THE STAR, MONDAY 17 APRIL 2023

Health hazard on the rise

Ongoing heatwave and haze may get worse, people urged to take precautions

By RAGANANTHINI
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PETALING JAYA: City folk have to brace themselves for increasing haze and heat that could pose major health risks, say experts.

They warned that besides discomfort, the current hot and dry weather condition can bring about heat stroke as well as respiratory problems such as asthma.

Public health expert Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar urged the people to take care of themselves by staying hydrated, avoiding outdoor activities in extreme heat, and wearing appropriate clothing.

"It is vital to prioritise health and well-being during extreme weather conditions and the necessary precautions should be taken to stay safe.

"Use umbrellas or wear hats

while outdoors to avoid exposure to direct sunlight.

"To beat the heat, people can drink more water and fruit juices, and eat more fruits.

"It is also important to be aware of physical changes, particularly for those at high risk of heat stroke and exhaustion.

"Although there aren't many cases of heat stroke in Malaysia, the public should be cautious," he said in an interview.

As at 2pm yesterday, Segamat recorded the highest Air Pollutant Index (API) for unhealthy air quality at 152.

Tanah Merah in Kelantan and Cheras in Kuala Lumpur also recorded unhealthy readings at 107 and 106 respectively.

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

Meanwhile, Dr Zainal Ariffin said that as Covid-19 cases are also on the rise, clinics should be mindful that some symptoms of the virus infection could be similar to those of heat stroke.

"Doctors must exercise caution when patients seek advice," he said.

Malaysian Chinese Medical Association president Heng Aik Teng reminded people to avoid keeping their air conditioning at the lowest temperature to allow their body to slowly adapt to the outdoor heat.

He also suggested that people drink more water and herbal tea to relieve the heat, adding that many had fallen ill due to changes in the weather.

"If people feel dizzy, stuffy and sweaty, it could be a sign of heat stroke. They should seek medical attention immediately," he advised.

Andrea Lim, 30, from Cheras,

said she noticed the sky was quite hazy on Saturday and decided to put on her mask outdoors.

She said the weather had been extremely hot and stuffy for the past few days.

"I had to install an additional air cooler because I simply couldn't sleep at night," she added.

Kyra Carvalho, 19, from Bangsar, said she noticed the hazy condition in the city centre yesterday evening.

"There was also a smoky smell in the air," said the Sunway University student, adding that many of her friends also noticed the change in air quality over the past few days.

"Even with the air conditioning on at full blast, it still feels warm," she said, adding that most of her friends spend their time indoors now.

Alliance for Safe Community founder and chairman Tan Sri

Lee Lam Thye urged the relevant enforcement agencies to take immediate steps against open burning to stop the haze from getting worse.

He said swift action must be taken to prevent the situation from becoming a health hazard.

"Enforcement cannot solely be the responsibility of the Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Ministry.

"It must be a concerted effort by several agencies, including local councils such as City Hall, which has its own health and environment officers," he added.

Lee said there must be an immediate response from enforcement agencies should open burning be detected, and asked the Plantation and Commodities Ministry to help the agricultural sector move away from such activity as a means to clear land.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 15
RUANGAN : VIEWS

Nurture healthcare sector

MALAYSIAN Medics International (MMI) is deeply concerned that the Public Service Department (PSD) will stop sponsoring first degrees for medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing and para-medical programmes in 2023 (*The Star*, March 24; online at bit.ly/star_scholar).

While this may be regarded as a necessary drastic measure to manage the surge in medical graduate numbers in recent years, abruptly halting the scholarships may not be the answer. We believe this decision will impact the near and long-term future of Malaysia's healthcare sector by reducing interest in medical-related programmes.

We call upon the PSD, other relevant stakeholders, and distinguished policymakers to consider the following:

> **Clarify the decision:** The decision to discontinue sponsoring students intending to study medical-related programmes in local universities seemed to have been made suddenly and without providing any explanations. MMI urges the PSD to provide more information on this decision by disclosing its rationale to the public.

Students who need scholarships to fund medical studies will be dissuaded from pursuing the healthcare profession, and in the long run, this may compromise the quality of healthcare professionals the country produces.



We call upon the Malaysian government to acknowledge the significance of investing in these programmes to ensure that the healthcare needs of the country are met.

> **Review policies on human resource planning in the healthcare sector:** MMI calls upon the PSD to provide details of its analysis of the future of the Malaysian healthcare sector to allow policymakers to review human resources policies and tailor them to current healthcare needs while also taking future population growth into consideration.

> **The shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly specialists, remains a pressing issue that has yet to be adequately addressed:** Despite recommendations in the 11th

Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) for Malaysia to achieve a 1:400 doctor-to-patient ratio in public healthcare facilities, this target has not yet been met.

> **House Officer shortage:** According to a written reply in the Dewan Rakyat last month by Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa, data from the Health Ministry indicated that only 62% of House Officer positions have been filled because of such officers not completing training, resigning, or being terminated.

Stopping medical-related scholarships will not help fill these needs as it would only reduce the number of qualified and skilled healthcare professionals available in the future.

We urge the PSD to take immediate consideration of the afore-

mentioned issues and review the decision to stop the scholarships. Although it may offer a temporary solution to the high number of medical graduates, we may see a deterioration in the public healthcare sector in the near future if this scenario were to persist.

As medical students, we are devoted to serving the rakyat. Therefore, we implore the stakeholders to strive towards establishing a conducive environment that nurtures the growth and development of healthcare professionals in Malaysia.

MALAYSIAN MEDICS
INTERNATIONAL (MMI)
Term 2022/2023

This letter is endorsed by:
MALAYSIAN PHARMACY
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
MALAYSIAN DENTAL
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
ASIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION MALAYSIA
UM MEDICAL SOCIETY
MILITARY MEDICINE,
NATIONAL DEFENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
MEDICINE MALAYSIA STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

Malaysian Medics
International is a
medical-student-led
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