

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

# Tempoh kuarantin pengembara perlu diteliti semula

Pakar berpendapat pendekatan bergantung data luar negara tidak lagi relevan

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**Kuala Lumpur:** Tempoh kuarantin bagi rakyat Malaysia yang pulang dari luar negara wajar diteliti semula susulan gelombang Omicron dan kesan pengambilan vaksin secara heterologous.

Pakar virologi dari Universiti Malaya (UM), Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar, berkata pententuan tempoh kuarantin sebagai langkah penambahbaikan prosedur operasi standard (SOP) itu hanya dapat dibuat menerusi kajian terperinci di dalam negara.

Jelnya, pendekatan untuk terus bergantung kepada data dari luar negara, sama ada agensi atau pertubuhan antarabangsa tidak lagi relevan, memandangkan Malaysia mempunyai latar belakang pemberian vaksin secara heterologous atau dos primer dan penggalak yang bercampur.

"Sukar untuk tentukan atau sahkan sama ada tempoh kuarantin tujuh hari mencukupi bendung ancaman penularan Omicron

caman penularan Omicron yang dilaporkan mengalami pelbagai mutasi.

"Kita kena ambil kira faktor dos vaksin primer dan penggalak yang berbeza, sama ada ia memberi kesan kepada kadar kebolehjangkitan seseorang sekiranya disahkan positif COVID-19.

"Hal ini kerana ada satu kes sebelum ini, membabitkan kanak-kanak berusia 10 tahun, tanpa rekod vaksin yang badannya mengandungi jumlah virus mencukupi untuk menjangkiti orang lain pada hari ke-17.

"Nilai ambang kitaran (CT) pada kanak-kanak ini pada hari ke-17 masih tinggi iaitu sekitar 20, sekali guna menimbulkan tanda tanya mengenai keperluan menyemak semula tempoh kuarantin," katanya kepada BH, semalam.

Ujian diagnostik menggunakan Polimerase-Transkripsi Terbalik (RT-PCR) bagi mengesan kehadiran virus COVID-19 dalam tubuh badan seseorang lazimnya membabitkan kira-kira 40 kitaran.

Sekiranya nilai CT yang di-

peroleh dalam ujian berkenaan rendah, ia bermaksud kesan virus dalam badan adalah tinggi dan jangkitan COVID-19 berada pada peringkat awal.

Berkuat kuasa 18 Oktober 2021, Malaysia menetapkan tempoh kuarantin selama tujuh hari bagi mereka yang lengkap vaksinasi COVID-19, manakala yang tiada atau tidak lengkap vaksinasi, perlu menjalani tempoh kuarantine selama 10 hari.

Menteri Kesihatan, Khairy Jamaluddin, semalam dilaporkan berkata Jemaah Menteri bersempena untuk menangguhkan kebenaran perjalanan umrah bagi tempoh sebulan, mulai hari ini bagi memberi laluan proses pernialan risiko.

Sepanjang tempoh penangguhan secara sementara itu, beberapa SOP akan disemak, khususnya membabitkan pengurusan kes dan kontak rapat di Arab Saudi, pengambilan dos penggalak sebagai syarat umrah dan memperkuatkannya tanggungjawab dalam kalangan agensi pelancongan berkaitan.

**Sukar untuk tentukan atau sahkan sama ada tempoh kuarantin tujuh hari mencukupi bendung ancaman penularan Omicron**

Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar,  
Pakar virologi dari UM



## MiTDA tawar 30,000 kit RT-PCR percuma

**Kuala Lumpur:** Sebanyak 30,000 kit ujian Polimerase-Transkripsi Terbalik (RT-PCR) akan ditawarkan secara percuma kepada warganegara yang pulang ke tanah air.

Penyediaan kit ujian menggunakan teknologi baharu dari Korea Selatan itu diyakini berupaya mempercepatkan proses saringan dan pengurusan kuarantin, memandangkan ia hanya memerlukan tempoh kurang sejam untuk mendapatkan pengesahan keputusan.

Ketua Pegawai Operasi Asia Coding Centre, Datuk Dr Khalid Ibrahim, berkata penyediaan kit ujian itu dibuat hasil kerjasama dengan Persatuan Pembangunan

Pelancongan Antarabangsa Malaysia (MiTDA) menerusi strategi "serampang dua mata".

Selain memperkenalkan teknologi baharu, katanya, kit ujian berkenaan bakal menjadi pemangkin ke arah pembukaan semula sektor-pelancongan di Malaysia secara selamat, strategik dan lebih dinamik.

"Ujian ini hanya ambil masa antara 45 minit hingga sejam, berbanding RT-PCR konvensional yang digunakan ketika ini iaitu lima hingga lapan jam.

"Sekiranya tempoh saringan berupaya dipercepatkan, kaedah pengurusan kuarantin, kawalan wabak dan pembendungan vari-

an berbahaya mampu dilakukan dengan lebih tuntas.

"Hal ini kerana, keputusan RT-PCR bagi pengembara luar ketika ini mengambil masa kirai-kira tiga hari untuk disahkan, justeru memperlambangkan aspek kawalan wabak.

"Menerusi teknologi baharu ini, keputusan RT-PCR diperoleh dalam tempoh singkat, sebelum Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) dapat melakukan genotyping assay dan ujian jujukan penuh (WGS) bagi meneliti jenis variannya," katanya pada sidang media, di sini, semalam.

Menerusi persetujuan dengan KKM, Khalid berkata dua lorong di balai ketibaan akan diwujud-

kan, masing-masing untuk kegunaan warganegara yang bakal diberikan kit saringan percuma dan warga asing dikendalikan KKM.

Jelasnya, tarikh operasi pembukaan kit saringan percuma itu kini dalam peringkat akhir penelitian oleh KKM.

"Kita sudah dapat dua kali kelulusan daripada Institut Penyelidikan Perubatan (IMR) dan Pihak Berkasur Peranti Perubatan (MDA), masing-masing pada Oktober 2020 serta September 2021.

"Aspek ketepatan dan sensitiviti RT-PCR menggunakan teknologi Korea Selatan ini sama seperti RT-PCR konvensional," katanya.

Sementara itu, Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif MiTDA, Kapten Mahdzir Mansor, berkata kerjasama untuk menyediakan 30,000 kit saringan percuma itu membabitkan peruntukan RM7.5 juta.

Bersandarkan usaha sama strategik itu, beliau menaruh keyakinan bahawa matlamat Malaysia untuk meraih resit pelancongan menjangkau RM100 bilion yang sepatutnya dicapai pada 2020, berupaya dilakar dalam tempoh terdekat.

"Kita perlu bersiap sedia dari segi semua aspek supaya sektor pelancongan Malaysia dapat kembali dibuka secepat mungkin, secara selamat dan terawal," katanya.



Jumlah jangkitan menurun sedikit kepada 3,381 kes

**Kuala Lumpur:** Jumlah jangkitan positif baru COVID-19 semalam dilaporkan sebanyak 3,381 kes, turun sedikit berbanding 3,643 kes kelmarin.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata tambahan jangkitan baru itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes sebanyak 2,780,080 kes.

Selangor mencatat jumlah jangkitan tertinggi dengan 879 kes diikuti Kelantan sebanyak 385 kes, Johor 299 kes dan Kuala Lumpur, 271 kes.

"Sabah merekodkan 242 kes,彭亨 (226 kes), Pulau Pinang (219 kes), dan Kedah sebanyak 216 kes.

"Negeri Sembilan mencatatkan 172 kes Perak (161 kes), Melaka (141 kes), Terengganu (94 kes), Putrajaya (30 kes), Sarawak 18 kes manakala Labuan dan Perlis masing-masing 14 kes katanya.

Sementara itu, BERNAMA melaporkan sebanyak 2.3 peratus sahaja lagi diperlukan negara untuk mencapai angka 100 peratus populasi dewasa yang lengkap divaksinasi.

Berdasarkan data Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia

(KKM) menerusi laman COVIDNOW, setakat jam 11.59 malam kelmarin, seramai 22,876,224 individu atau 97.7 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di negara ini telah lengkapkan suntikan vaksin COVID-19.

Setakat kelmarin juga, 98.9 peratus atau 23,162,767 individu daripada populasi dewasa sudah menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun pula, seramai 2,763,787 individu atau 87.8 peratus daripada mereka telah melengkapkan vaksinasi manakala 2,854,126 individu atau 90.7 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin COVID-19.

Sementara itu, sejumblah 252,817 dos vaksin diberikan kelmarin membabitkan 2,898 dos pertama, 4,549 dos lengkap dan 245,370 dos penggalak.

Perkembangan itu menjadikan jumlah kumulatif pembarian vaksin menerusi Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan (PICK) meningkat kepada 58,812,436 dos dengan 7,356,445 daripadanya adalah dos penggalak.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 27

RUANGAN : DUNIA



# Arab Saudi tetapkan selang masa 10 hari untuk umrah kedua

**Langkah berwaspada susulan lonjakan kes jangkitan varian Omicron**

**Riyadh:** Kementerian Haji dan Umrah Arab Saudi menetapkan selang masa 10 hari untuk pengeluaran permit antara dua ibadah

umrah merangkumi semua peringkat umur jemaah.

Saudi Gazette, yang memetik kenyataan kementerian itu di Twitter, melaporkan jemaah boleh membuat tempahan untuk umrah kedua melalui aplikasi Eatmarna atau Tawakkalna selepas tempoh 10 hari menuaikan umrah pertama.

Keputusan itu dibuat selepas kementerian itu kembali melaksanakan langkah berwaspada dan protokol kesihatan seperti pemakaian pelitup muka dan penjarakan fizikal di Masjidil Haram, Makkah serta Masjid Na-

bawi, Madinah.

Tindakan itu didorong kebimbangan kerana lonjakan kes jangkitan COVID-19 terutama penularan varian Omicron yang semakin meningkat.

Sebelum ini, selang masa 15 hari ditetapkan antara dua umrah, namun ia dibatalkan pada Oktober lalu selepas pelonggaran sekatan COVID-19.

Ini termasuk membenarkan had kapasiti penuh untuk jemaah berusia 12 tahun ke atas menuaikan solat di kedua-dua masjid suci dan menziarahi Raudhah di Masjid Nabawi.

AGENSI

# Kes pertama jangkitan Flurona dikesan di AS

**New York:** Kes pertama jangkitan selesesa dan COVID-19 secara serentak atau Flurona dikesan pada dua kanak-kanak di Amerika Syarikat (AS).

Menurut laporan USA Today, kes berkenaan masing-masing dikesan di Texas dan California Selatan.

"Kes pertama membabitkan pesakit pediatrik itu disahkan di Hospital Kanak-kanak Texas Isnin lalu.

"Kanak-kanak berkenaan bagaimanapun tidak dirawat di hospital," menurut laporan itu sambil menambah tiada butiran lanjut mengenai pesakit didekahkan.

Hospital Kanak-kanak Texas yang mengesahkan jangkitan serentak itu kini bekerjasama dengan pakar perubatan lain di seluruh negara untuk melakukan penyelidikan lanjut.

Hospital itu juga adalah kemudahan kesihatan pertama melaporkan jangkitan COVID-19 dan

virus berkaitan pernafasan (RSV) pada musim panas lalu.

Sementara itu, kes kedua dienal pasti di Brentwood, California pada Sabtu lalu di sebuah pusat ujian saringan COVID-19 berasaskan ujian saringan RSV.

Maklumat awal yang diperoleh mendapat pesakit dari Cabo San Lucas, Mexico itu sedang bercuti di AS bersama keluarganya.

"Kanak-kanak itu menunjukkan gejala, namun tidak serius dan tidak memerlukan rawatan di hospital," lapor rangkaian TV, KVEA pada Rabu lalu, memetik kenyataan jurucakap pusat ujian 911 COVID, Steve Farzam.

Difahamkan, kes jangkitan COVID-19 dalam kalangan kanak-kanak masih rendah berikutnya hanya 803 rakyat AS berusia 18 tahun ke bawah maut akibat coronavirus antara musim bunga 2020 dan 29 Disember 2021.

Kes positif di AS itu dilaporkan beberapa hari selepas jangkitan

Kakitangan kesihatan melakukan ujian saringan keatas orang ramai secara pandu lalu di Ohio, susulan lonjakan kes varian Omicron. (Foto AFP)



pertama Flurona dikesan pada seorang wanita di Israel, yang turut mengalami gejala ringan.

Susulan itu, pihak berkusa kesihatan di Tel Aviv kini melakukan kajian lanjut terhadap kes berkenaan untuk menentukan sama ada

## Duterte arah tangkap individu tidak divaksin

**Manila:** Presiden Filipina, Rodrigo Duterte, mengugut mereka yang tidak disuntik vaksin COVID-19 akan ditahan jika ingkar perintah duduk di rumah berikutan jangkitan mencatat rekod tertinggi dalam tempoh tiga bulan.

Beliau, dalam ucapan rasmi menerusi televisyen, meminta pemimpin masyarakat mengawasi mereka yang tidak divaksin dan memastikan tidak meninggalkan rumah masing-masing.

"Kalau mereka enggan, masih mahu keluar rumah dan bercampur dengan masyarakat, mereka patut dihalang dan jika masih degil, pemimpin masyarakat boleh menahan mereka," katanya.

Jangkitan harian coronavirüs di Filipina mencapai tahap tertinggi sejak 26 September lalu dengan 17,220 kes semalam termasuk jangkitan varian Omicron, menurut Kementerian Kesihatan.

Ini adalah lebih tiga kali ganda berbanding rekod Selasa lalu, yang membawa kepada jumlah kumulatif lebih 2.88 juta jangkitan termasuk lebih 51,700 kematian iaitu kes COVID-19 keduatertinggi di Asia tenggara selepas Indonesia.

Duterte berkata beliau bertanggungjawab kepada setiap rakyat Filipina dan mencabar sesiapa yang membantah keputusan itu untuk memfaikkan

**Kalau mereka enggan, masih mahu keluar rumah dan bercampur dengan masyarakat, mereka patut dihalang dan jika masih degil, pemimpin masyarakat boleh menahan mereka**

**Rodrigo Duterte, Presiden Filipina**

kes terhadapnya.

Pada hujung tahun lalu, 49.8 juta atau 45 peratus daripada 110 juta penduduk Filipina sudah menerima dos lengkap vaksin COVID-19.

Di bawah undang-undang sedia ada, orang yang tidak divaksin di ibu negara, Manila, hanya boleh meninggalkan rumah untuk tujuan penting saja.

Filipina setakat ini merekodkan 43 jangkitan domistik dan import varian Omicron, sekali gus mendorong kerajaan mengambil tindakan kawalan lebih drastik.

REUTERS

yang disebabkan oleh COVID-19 dan virus selesama.

Katanya, walaupun risiko gandingan serangan itu berlaku di India adalah amat rendah, risikonya tetap ada kerana negara itu juga adalah merekodkan kes selesama.

"Tiada sebab khusus bagi seseorang untuk dijangkiti Flurona, malah kedua-dua jangkitan itu disebabkan oleh jenis virus yang berbeza dan berupaya menjangkiti individu daripada semua kumpulan umur."

"Gabungan antara selesama dan varian Delta atau Omicron boleh membahayakan tetapi masih terlalu awal bagi membuat sebarang kesimpulan," katanya.

Menurut Pakar Perunding Kanan-Perubatan Dalaman dan Penyakit Berjangkit di Hospital Sakra WORLD, Bengaluru, India, Dr Raghu J pula, warga emas, wanita hamil dan kanak-kanak lebih terdedah kepada virus itu.

AGENSI

**AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN**  
**MUKA SURAT : 13**  
**RUANGAN : VAKSIN UNTUK RAKYAT**

# Malaysia-Singapura nilai risiko teruskan VTL

Lihat semula kesediaan kedua-dua negara dalam menangani penularan varian Omicron

Oleh SHAFIQ TINO

ISKANDAR PUTERI

**K**erajaan Malaysia dan Singapura akan melakukan penilaian risiko sebelum memuktamadkan keputusan penjualan tiket menerusi laluan udara bagi inisiatif Laluan Perjalanan Lengkap Vaksin (VTL).

Menteri Pengangkutan, Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong berkata, perkara itu untuk memutuskan sama ada persetujuan penjualan tiket VTL udara yang dikurangkan kepada 50 peratus boleh dilaksanakan atau sebaliknya.

Katanya, usaha berkenaan juga bagi melihat semula keadaan semasa berdasarkan kesediaan kedua-dua negara dalam menangani penularan varian Omicron.

"Mulai 21 Januari ini, jika ikut perbincangan asal kita telah ber-setuju untuk membentarkan 50 peratus daripada kapasiti asal (1,440 pemohon) menggunakan VTL, cuma berikutnya Omicron ini, mereka (Singapura) buat semula keputusan untuk tangguhan lagi program agar tidak menambah permohonan baru."

"Bagaimanapun, dalam beberapa minggu ini kita akan buat penilaian lagi kalau kedua-dua pihak ber-setuju 50 peratus permohonan (VTL) boleh dijual, kita akan laksanakan, ia juga adalah sebaliknya jika tiada persetujuan," katanya.



Ka Siong (tiga dari kanan) dalam Majlis Meraikan Pencapaian PTP 2021 di Tanjung Pelepas, Iskandar Puteri pada Jumaat.

rapa minggu ini kita akan buat penilaian lagi kalau kedua-dua pihak ber-setuju 50 peratus permohonan (VTL) boleh dijual, kita akan laksanakan, ia juga adalah sebaliknya jika tiada persetujuan," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian dalam sidang akbar ketika menghadiri Majlis Meraikan Pencapaian PTP 2021 di Tanjung Pelepas di sini pada Jumaat.

Hadir sama, Menteri Besar Johor, Datuk Hasni Mohammad dan Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif PTP Marco Neelsen.

Sebelum ini, media melaporkan penjualan tiket bas dan pergerakan VTL antara Malaysia-Singapura digantung semestara sehingga 20 Januari 2022.

Keputusan itu dibuat dengan mengambil kira laporan Kementerian Kesihatan Singapura pada 20 Disember lalu berhubung kejadian satu kluster tempatan

Covid-19 yang melibatkan tiga kes positif termasuk kemungkinan varian Omicron.

Mengulas lanjut, Ka Siong berkata, dalam perbincangan sebelum ini, Malaysia dan Singapura telah mencapai persetujuan awal menyambung semula inisiatif ini dengan jumlah jualan tiket pergerakan dikurangkan sehingga 50 peratus.

Bagaimanapun katanya, keputusan tersebut juga tertakluk kepada kerajaan Singapura yang akan menilai situasi semasa Covid-19 di republik itu terutama terhadap perkembangan varian Omicron atau varian baharu lain.

Dalam pada itu, Ka Siong berkata, berdasarkan rekod sejak dilancarkan pada 29 November lalu, seramai 37,783 individu telah menerima manfaat daripada inisiatif itu sama ada bagi tujuan keluar atau masuk melalui laluan udara.

## 3,381 kes baharu, Selangor tertinggi

**PUTRAJAYA** - Jumlah kes seluruhan kes positif Covid-19 meningkat kepada 2,780,080 selepas 3,381 lagi kes baharu direkodkan Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM).

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, Selangor mencatatkan 879 kes diikuti Kelantan (385), Johor (299), Kuala Lumpur (271), Sabah (242), Pahang (226), Pulau Pinang (219) dan Kedah (216).

Negeri Sembilan melaporkan 172 kes, Perak (161), Melaka (141), Putrajaya (30) dan Sarawak (18).

Sementara Perlis dan Labuan masing-masing merekodkan 14 kes.

"Daripada jumlah baharu yang dilaporkan, sebanyak 319 merupakan kes impor membabitkan 284 rakyat tempatan dan 35 warga asing," katanya.

Menurutnya, jumlah kes harian juga terdiri daripada 37 kes kategori tiga hingga lima manakala 3,344 lagi adalah kategori satu dan dua.

"Seramai 254 pesakit dirawat di unit rawatan rapi (ICU) dan 114 kes memerlukan bantuan pernafasan," katanya.

Beliau berkata, sebanyak 3,447 kes sembuh turut dilaporkan menjadikan jumlah kumulatif adalah 2,708,739 kes.

"Ia bersamaan dengan 97.4 peratus daripada keseluruhan kes," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, enam kluster baharu dikenal pasti KKM dan keseluruhannya adalah 6,156 kluster.

Bagaimanapun, 5,974 daripadanya telah diisyitarkan tamat dan 182 kluster masih aktif.

Pada perkembangan sama, kadar kebolehijangkitan (Rt) menurun kepada 0.96 namun Labuan merekodkan nilai 1.10 disusuli Sabah 1.05.

Nilai Rt negeri-negeri lain berada di antara 0.83 (Sarawak) dan 0.99 (Putrajaya).

Dua kluster varian Omicron libat jemaah umrah di Pahang

**KUANTAN** - Sebanyak dua kluster varian Omicron melibatkan jemaah umrah telah dikesan di Pahang.

Kluster terlibat ialah Kluster Jengka 25 Saudi (enam kes) melibatkan daerah Temerloh dan Pekan serta Kluster Keratong 5 Saudi (25 kes) melibatkan daerah Rompin.

Pengarah Kesihatan Pahang, Datuk Dr Nor Azimi Yunus berkata, setakat ini hanya enam kes disahkan varian Omicron namun ujian jujuhan genom penuh (WGS) ke atas sampel kontak rapat sedang dijalankan.

Menurutnya, Pahang turut mengesahkan dua kluster melibatkan jemaah umrah di Rompin iaitu Kluster Rumah Kedai Keratong 5 Saudi

(sembilan kes) dan Kluster Keratong 2 Saudi (11 kes).

"Mereka ini juga sedang menunggu pengesahan WGS," katanya pada Jumaat.

Beliau berbuka, walaupun jangkitan varian Omicron telah dibuktikan bersifat ringan tapi kadar jangkitan adalah tiga kali ganda berbanding Delta.

"Jika tidak dibendung awal, jangkitan berisiko akan meluas dan bakal memberi beban besar kepada pihak hospital.

"Tiada siapa yang pernah jangka impak pandemik Covid-19 kepada dunia termasuk Malaysia," katanya.

Tambah beliau, semua negara sedang berusaha keras memikirkan tindakan kawalan terbaik.

Tinggal 2.3 peratus untuk capai populasi dewasa lengkap vaksinasi

**KUALA LUMPUR** - Hanya 2.3 peratus sahaja lagi diperlukan negara untuk mencapai angka 100 peratus populasi dewasa lengkap divaksinasi.

Berdasarkan data Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) menerusi laman CovidNow, setakat jam 11.59 malam Khamis, seramai 22,876,224 individu atau 97.7 peratus daripada populasi dewasa di negara ini telah melengkapkan suntikan vaksin Covid-19.

Setakat Khamis juga, 98.9 peratus atau 23,162,767 individu daripada populasi dewasa sudah menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin.

Bagi populasi remaja berusia 12 hingga 17 tahun pula, seramai 2,763,787 individu atau 87.8 peratus daripada mereka telah melengkapkan vaksinasi manakala 2,854,126 individu atau 90.7 peratus menerima sekurang-kurangnya satu dos vaksin Covid-19.

Sementara itu, sejumlah 252,817 dos vaksin diberikan pada Khamis melibatkan 2,898 dos pertama, 4,549 dos lengkap dan 245,370 dos penggalak. - Bernama



AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION



A graphic released by the Health Ministry explaining how Facebook's automatic translation function had interpreted 'air kosong' as 'empty water'. PIC COURTESY OF HEALTH MINISTRY

## LOST IN TRANSLATION

# HEALTH MINISTRY CLARIFIES FB GAFFES

Platform's automatic feature caused erroneous translations, says ministry

AHMAD FAIRUZ OTHMAN  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**T**HE Health Ministry has explained two translation mistakes on its Facebook account, which recently went viral.

The ministry said it had no part in the English translations made on these posts, which were both originally written in Bahasa Malaysia.

It said the translation gaffes were caused by Facebook's automatic translation function, which was controlled by the user's settings on a smartphone or device.

In citing the first case, the ministry said the screenshot of an erroneous translation of the honorific "Datuk" to "grandfather" in a poster published in December 2020 was due to this "auto translate text" feature.

"The issue cropped up (in December 2020) and was spread again recently, and the screenshot made it seem like the posting was recently uploaded three hours ago (based on what is seen in the screenshot).

"The screenshot that was spread does not reflect the original poster," it said, while providing a link to the original poster in Bahasa Malaysia.

The poster was a congratulatory message on the appointment of the ministry's new deputy secretary-general (finance).

"The original post was in Bahasa Malaysia, not English. The Health Ministry found that the screenshot of the Facebook post, which was spread on WhatsApp, appeared that way due to users who activated the 'auto translate text' functions on their smartphones.

"This caused the word 'Datuk', not recognised as a special title by Facebook, to be translated automatically as 'grandfather' on their phones."

The ministry said to avoid further confusion, its Facebook administrator would provide Bahasa Malaysia and English texts of a post.

It said the ministry's Facebook administrator had also activated

the "Your post will remain in the original language" setting for its page to ensure incorrect translations would no longer appear since Dec 10, 2020.

The ministry said another error had also gone viral.

It denied claims that the ministry had incorrectly translated the Bahasa Malaysia phrase "air kosong" to "empty water" as what was claimed after a screenshot of the incorrect phrase went viral on WhatsApp.

It said similar to the first case, the error which appeared on social media users' feeds was also due to the automatic translation feature on Facebook, which some users might have activated.

The correct translation of the phrase should be "plain water".

The ministry urged social media users to take note of such translation features and avoid relying on them.

"To avoid confusion, we seek the public's cooperation to not rely solely on the auto translate function since it does not provide an accurate explanation."

The Health Ministry said it hoped the clarification would rectify the wrong perceptions and confusion which arose in regard to these supposed translation gaffes by the ministry.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

MUKA SURAT : 3

RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

# EXPERT: 360,000 JABS A DAY NEEDED

Call to ease fears among elderly about mix-and-match boosters to spur vaccination uptake

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**M**ALAYSIA needs to administer around 360,000 Covid-19 vaccine booster jabs per day to cover 80 per cent of the population by the end of February to ensure optimal protection against the disease.

Experts said this would also allow vaccine recipients, particularly the elderly and those initially administered with the Sinovac vaccine, to keep their "fully vaccinated" status.

They also raised concern about prevalent vaccine hesitancy in the country, which remains a challenge across the population amid the threat of the Omicron variant which could see stringent restrictions being re-imposed.

They called on the Health Ministry, Immigration Department and travel agencies handling umrah and hajj pilgrimages to explain how unvaccinated individuals were allowed to travel to Saudi Arabia, contributing to a growing number of imported Omicron infections.

Epidemiologist Professor Datuk Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud of Universiti Malaya said the government had to increase its daily vaccine administration capacity to ramp up booster coverage.

Malaysia, he said, needed to administer 26 million booster jabs, and only seven million booster jabs had been administered so far.

"Therefore, there are 19 million boosters jabs to go. At the current rate of around 250,000 jabs per day, the country will require 76 vaccination days, taking us almost to the end of March 2022."

"The newer Covid-19 vaccination centres (and the reopening of mega centres in the Klang Valley) can help meet the target, but an additional capacity of 100,000 booster jabs per day needs to be added to the current 250,000," he told the *New Straits Times*.



People waiting for their Covid-19 vaccine booster shots at the Seberang Jaya offsite expo grounds in Penang on Thursday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD.



Professor Datuk Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud

Dr Awang Bulgiba, who is the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry's Covid-19 Epidemiological Analysis and Strategies Task Force chairman, cited a few reasons behind booster hesitancy.

He said people could have had adverse effects from the primary jabs and did not want to go through a similar experience.

With daily cases and deaths having declined significantly since last year's peak, he said people might not feel the urgent need for booster jabs.

He said individuals who received Sinovac or AstraZeneca as primary jabs might also have cold feet over the possibility of getting a heterologous ("mix and match")

vaccine using Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty instead of a homologous booster, which added to their uncertainty and hesitancy.

"There is also the wait-and-see attitude, as many people are probably just waiting for the Health Ministry to give out appointments via MySejahtera."

"The elderly, especially retirees, have probably less to lose through revocation of their fully vaccinated status, compared with younger working vaccinees, who may depend on their fully vaccinated status to remain in employment or to enter premises. So, the mo-

tivation among the elderly to get booster jabs is probably lower compared with younger people," he said.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin on Thursday said more than half of senior citizens in five states, namely Pahang, Terengganu, Perlis, Kelantan and Sabah, had yet to receive Covid-19 booster shots.

On Dec 16, Khairy said everybody aged 60 and above, and Sinovac recipients must get their booster doses by February to keep their "fully vaccinated" status.

Dr Awang Bulgiba said boosters were probably the best and most practical preventive action in the fight against Covid-19, particularly in mitigating a potential Omicron-fuelled wave.

He said the government should improve its crisis communications and roll out the booster vaccination campaign with the help of medical experts, behavioural scientists and communication specialists, to allay public fears.

"Everyone who has been vaccinated (Sinovac or AstraZeneca vaccines) but are now being offered Pfizer boosters have overcome whatever initial fear they may have had about the Covid-19 vaccine."

"Their current uncertainty is about the heterologous approach,

not about whether they should be vaccinated.

"Younger vaccinees are probably convinced through social media, but the older vaccinees need to be reached via other means — perhaps through religious sermons, TV, print media and their local health clinics."

On a related matter, he said since Saudi Arabia only allowed the fully immunised to enter, umrah agencies and the Immigration Department must explain how unvaccinated pilgrims were allowed to fly out.

Malaysian Mental Health Association president Datuk Dr Andrew Mohanraj said other reasons for booster hesitancy could be side effects from a previous vaccination, bad experience while getting the vaccination and misinformation on booster doses on social media.

The consultant psychiatrist shared an incident involving a 75-year-old retired lawyer who was shocked to find large crowds at a vaccine centre, but did not appear to cater to the needs of an elderly person like her.

"She drove around the centre and went back home, refusing to take her booster dose and decided to leave it to fate," he said.

Many elderly are also overwhelmed by updates on the vac-

cine guidelines, the potency of ever-evolving strains of the virus and other logistical challenges, leading them to decide to leave things as they are and making them less enthusiastic to get booster shots.

This category of people might be unfazed with the possibility of losing their vaccination status, he said.

Dr Mohanraj said the strategy to win over the elderly should include impressing on their contribution to the community in reducing the risk of infection.

"It must be done through local community, religious leaders and family physicians or medical staff at Klinik Kesihatan. Public health communications must be tailored for this group."

Additionally, logistical barriers can demoralise and incapacitate the elderly, making them feel undervalued, resulting in them being dismissive of the system and to be resigned to their fate.

"The core of the vaccination issue lies on building trust, raising awareness as well as putting forward an argument that vaccination is the surest route to the eventual return to a life for every generation."

Molecular virologist Dr Vinod Balasubramanian of the Jeffrey Cheah School of Medicine and Health Sciences at Monash University Malaysia said "vaccine fatigue" especially among the elderly could contribute to the low booster rates.

Many elderly people, he said, might think that primary doses were sufficient to give protection and, therefore, were less concerned with the subsequent dose, even if it meant losing their vaccinated status.

"Many are refusing to go through the ordeal of getting the vaccine again, from standing in long queues to having severe side effects, which can be daunting for people in their age group. At the end of the day, it begs the question — is it worth it?"

Vinod was also puzzled how unvaccinated individuals managed to go for the umrah.

"This shows that despite the SOP and rules, we clearly lack enforcement. Something is fundamentally wrong somewhere. How did they get the clearance at the border and from airlines?"

"Omicron is already here, and missteps like this are a recipe for disaster."

Public health expert and epidemiologist Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar urged the Health Ministry to investigate the matter and share the findings with the public.

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

## LACKLUSTRE RESPONSE

# FALSE INFO HAMPERING VAX DRIVE IN KEDAH

People doubt safety of booster shots due to unverified info spread by anti-vax groups

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**L**ACK of credible information and the spread of misinformation by anti-vaccine groups are some of the reasons behind the lukewarm respond to Covid-19 booster shots among the adult population in Kedah.

Rahimah Rahman, a project co-ordinator for a volunteer organisation, believed that the false information spread by the anti-vaccine movement supporters affected the way people perceived the booster shots.

"We identified this as one of the reasons behind the lacklustre response to booster shots after talking to some family members and their friends. They said they had doubts about the safety of the booster shots after getting unverified information from anti-vaccine supporters."

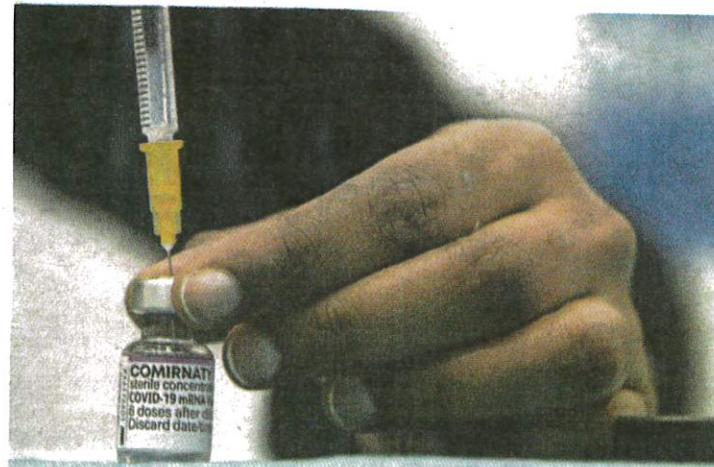
Rahimah said many people who had completed their Covid-19 vaccination doses also raised doubts about the efficacy of booster shots.

"A similar situation happened when we first rolled out the Covid-19 National Vaccination Programme last year, where many people adopted the wait-and-see approach."

"They are not convinced (of the vaccine's efficacy) until they are convinced that there are no harmful side-effects from the booster shots."

To address the people's booster hesitancy, Rahimah said, a series of aggressive campaigns should be carried out to create public awareness on the importance of getting the booster doses.

"The Health Ministry should consider working closely with non-governmental organisations and volunteers to go to the



The Health Ministry has said that five states are still under the 50 per cent booster coverage mark. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

ground, especially in rural areas, to educate the people."

A retired civil servant in his 60s, who wish to be identified only as Jamil, said he was still on the fence with regard to getting the third dose.

"There are a lot of conflicting messages on the booster shot. The government says it is crucial for us to get the injection, but some reports I read claim that it is not necessary."

"I am confused now. I am worried about

the possible serious side effects of the booster shots," said Jamil, who received two doses of the Sinovac vaccine last year.

Tun Teja Zainol, 69, from Kampung Changkat in Changlun, however, was happy to receive the booster shot amid fear of contracting new variants of Covid-19.

"People are talking about new Covid-19 variants, so I am relieved that I have taken the booster shot."

"Thankfully, I did not suffer any serious side effect. I was worried at first because there has been rumours about the harmful effects of the booster shots."

Tun Teja said some of her

friends were reluctant to receive their booster shot out of fear of serious side effects.

"I can't say about the others, but I am all fine after getting the booster shot."

On Thursday, state Health Department director Dr Othman Warijo said up to Dec 31, only 25 per cent of the Kedah's 1,385,282 adult population had taken their Covid-19 booster shots.

A total of 88.9 per cent of the state's adult population have completed their two Covid-19 vaccine doses, while 95.4 per cent of children aged between 12 and 17 have completed their full vaccination up to Dec 31.

Dr Othman, in his New Year address, urged the adult population in Kedah to take their Covid-19 booster shots to enhance their level of protection against new variants of the virus such as Delta and Omicron.

In Kota Baru, the senior citizens who refused to take the booster shots cited fear of the side effects and underlying health problems.

Most of them, who are aged 60 and above, said they believed it was not worth getting the booster shots given their health conditions.

Limah Awang Kechik, 67, from Kampung Tersang, said she got her first Covid-19 vaccine dose last year and did not go back for

the second dose, let alone the booster shot, after experiencing side effects, which she described as "nightmare".

"Soon after taking my first jab early last year, I started to feel pain all over my body."

"I had high fever for many days. Considering other illnesses that I have, I decided not to complete my vaccination although my family members kept pushing me to get it."

The mother of five claimed that the vaccine affected her mobility and that she was unable to walk properly since the first jab, apart from suffering from severe back pain.

Odd-job worker Husin Mat, 74, said he completed his first and second vaccine jabs last year, but was not ready for the booster shot.

"Many of my friends told me that they experienced bad side effects after taking the booster shot, so I was concerned after hearing that."

"I have made a decision not to take the booster shot although I have received an appointment date," said the father of six from Kampung Lanchang.

Kelantan is one of five states with low Covid-19 booster dose rates among the elderly.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin has said the five states that are still under the 50 per cent booster coverage mark are

## PANDEMIC UPDATES

## Covid-19 claims 19 more lives with 4 B.I.D. cases

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Covid-19 claimed another 19 lives yesterday, increasing the nationwide death toll to 31,628.

Data from the Health Ministry's CovidNow portal showed that four of the 19 deaths were brought-in-dead cases.

In the past two weeks, eight Covid-19 deaths were reported per million people with Terengganu continuing to record the highest fatality rate with 22 deaths per million.

Pahang and Perak both reported 14 deaths per million people, while Kelantan and Pahang recorded 10 cases per million people in the same period.

The country reported 3,381 new cases yesterday, raising the overall total to 2,780,080 cases. The new figures included 364 imported cases.

The rate of active cases has seen a steady decline in the past week, with 39,819 active cases to date.

The overall Intensive Care Unit (ICU) bed utilisation rate for Covid-19 cases in the country is on a rise at 56.3 per cent.

Only Putrajaya breached the 80 per cent mark in ICU bed utilisation rates followed by Kuala Lumpur (78.6 per cent) and the Klang Valley (70.3 per cent).

A total of 130 Covid-19 patients required ventilation, with a utilisation rate of 37.4 per cent.

More than 82 per cent were observing home quarantine, while 8.8 per cent are being treated at Covid-19 quarantine and treatment centres nationwide.

To date, 22.5 per cent or 7,356,445 of the total population have received their booster shots, while 25,640,011 or 78.5 per cent have been fully vaccinated.

Another 26,016,893 have received at least the first dose of the vaccine and are waiting for their second dose.

**In the past two weeks, eight Covid-19 deaths were reported per million people...**