

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MELAYU

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

Minda Pengarang

MOHAMAD AZLAN JAAFAR



Masa untuk KKM 'dipisahkan' dari JPA

SEMUA pekerjaan dan jawatan adalah penting. Pegawai polis, tentera, guru, pensyarah, hakim, kerani, jurujual, akauntan, wartawan, petani, pekerja kilang, pengawal keselamatan semua penting.

Malah, peranan pemotong rumput juga tidak kurang penting. Bayangkan lebuah raya atau kawasan perumahan yang tidak dipotong rumput. Setiap pekerja melengkapkan pembangunan negara.

Bagaimanapun daripada ribuan perjawatan, tiada jawatan menentukan hidup mati seseorang seperti perkhidmatan kesihatan. Setiap pesakit yang melangkah kaki ke hospital, dia menyerahkan 'kehidupannya' di tangan doktor dan jururawat.

Pernah sesiapa bertanya berapa ramai doktor telah menyaksikan kematian walaupun setelah gigih di wad dan bilik pembedahan. Berapa ramai pegawai perubatan yang memanjat di atas pesakit melakukan CPR selama 30 minit hanya untuk mengumumkan waktu kematian dan memberitahu keluarga pesakit berita kematian.

Siapa pernah bertanya perasaan mereka yang bekerja seharian, ada hanya sempat curi-curi makan atau tidak sempat mengerjakan solat kerana mementingkan tugas kerana ketaatan kepada ikrar yang diambil selepas menamatkan pengajian.

Tumpuan kepada perkhidmatan hospital kerajaan semakin mendapat perhatian umum. Tempoh menunggu yang panjang, kualiti perkhidmatan, ketiadaan katil dan waktu menunggu pembedahan, imbuhan tidak kompetitif dan waktu kerja yang panjang mampu memecahkan jati diri mereka yang terkuat.

Akhbar ini sejak beberapa minggu lalu telah memaparkan semuanya tanpa sebarang niat kecuali melihat perubahan kepada perkhidmatan kesihatan. Seperti negara menyaksikan lima perdana menteri dalam tempoh enam tahun, Malaysia menyaksikan jumlah menteri kesihatan yang sama dalam tempoh itu. Semua yang masuk menjual kisah indah hanya untuk meninggalkan kementerian itu dalam keadaan lebih teruk daripada sebelumnya.

Kini ia terletak di bahu Dr Zaliha Mustafa untuk membina semula KKM terutama dalam memulihkan imej perkhidmatan kesihatan awam.

Jelas dia berhadapan tugas besar dan perlu diberi masa dan peluang. Masalah hari ini adalah legasi kegagalan yang bersarang sejak bertahun-tahun. Kegagalan melabur secukupnya dalam infrastruktur dan sumber manusia bagi mencapai tahap kesihatan yang diinginkan rakyat. Keadaan akan semakin buruk kerana Malaysia sudah menuju ke arah negara menua dengan 15 peratus penduduknya berusia lebih 60 tahun menjelang 2030.

Kepimpinan bukan politik dalam kementerian juga harus bertanggungjawab. Ketua yang tidak berperang untuk masa depan kakitangannya adalah pemimpin yang lemah.

Langkah pertama bagi membina semula institusi perubatan awam ialah memisahkan kementerian itu daripada telunjuk Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam. Biarkan KKM menentukan strukturnya sendiri seperti badan kehakiman, jumlah kakitangan diperlukan di hospital, tangga gaji dan imbuhan, pelantikan, prosedur dan amalan. KKM harus dibebaskan daripada birokrasi negara. Melakukan perkara sama berulang kali hanya membawa kepada hasil yang sama.

Penyelesaian kepada rumah usang bukan pembaikan berterusan, sebaliknya membakarnya sehingga ke asasnya sebelum dibina semula dengan struktur baharu. Untuk itu ia memerlukan pemimpin berani yang tidak sayangkan pencen atau prestij jawatan tetapi mementingkan hasil akhir.

Jika pelek roadtax boleh dihapuskan, kenapa tidak perubahan kepada sektor kesihatan awam negara.

Mohamad Azlan Jaafar adalah Pengarang Kumpulan Media Mulia Sdn. Bhd.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
 MUKA SURAT : 6
 RUANGAN : NEWS / NATION

PAC REPORT

'COVID VAX PROCUREMENT NOT EXPLAINED TO CABINET'

It should have known the facts before making white paper decision, says Muhyiddin's ex-aide

MOHD NASARUDDIN PARZI
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A FORMER aide to Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin claimed that the cabinet was not provided with a comprehensive explanation on the Covid-19 vaccine acquisition issue, forcing a white paper to be tabled in Parliament.

Muhyiddin's former private secretary, Datuk Dr Marzuki Mohamad, said the Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) 521-

page report, which had been presented previously, had detailed everything.

"I feel that this process is not right. The cabinet should first be presented with facts that there is misappropriation. That there is confirmed and clear misappropriation. Then a decision on tabling a white paper can be made.

"The cabinet seems to be unsure. How can this be?"

"I think we are not unintelligent, so read the PAC report," said Marzuki on Facebook.

He questioned Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's statement at a press conference following a cabinet meeting last week that there was misappropriation in the procurement of



Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's former private secretary Datuk Dr Marzuki Mohamad (inset) says the Public Accounts Committee's 521-page report detailed everything on the procurement of the Covid-19 vaccine. FILE PIC

the Covid-19 vaccine and that a white paper will be presented in Parliament.

In a statement on Saturday, Anwar said the investigation body would probe the claim to determine if it was true.

Marzuki said the PAC report concluded that the vaccine acquisition was done properly.

"In the PAC, there is a permanent representative from the At-

torney-General's Chambers (A-GC).

"Based on this explanation and a lot more explanations in the proceedings, the PAC concluded the vaccine acquisition was conducted properly.

"I believe (the) facts will break any spin. What is the spin? That the acquisition did not get approval of the attorney-general and was not done properly, and that is why there was misappropriation and corruption by the Perikatan Nasional government and why a white paper will be presented in Parliament," said Marzuki.

Former health minister Khairy Jamaluddin also denied that there was any misappropriation in the acquisition of the Covid-19 vaccine and that all processes, including the terms, were checked by the A-GC and approved by the cabinet.

Khairy insists procedures were approved by Finance Ministry

KUALA LUMPUR: Former health minister Khairy Jamaluddin has reiterated that the Covid-19 vaccine procurement was done according to the procedures approved by the Finance Ministry.

Therefore, he said, there was no problem if an investigation into the matter was carried out.

"I emphasise once again, the procurement of (the Covid-19) vaccines was done according to

the procedures approved by the Finance Ministry. There is no problem if an investigation is done," he said in a brief reply to the New Straits Times Press.

Khairy was asked about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's remarks that details of the Covid-19 vaccine acquisition were made without the approval of the Attorney-General's Chambers (A-GC) based on information from the Health Ministry.

"What I have given is only a statement prepared by the Health Ministry and the cabinet to take note and the investigative bodies should look into this, whether it is true or not," he said.

Last Wednesday, Anwar announced that a white paper on the Covid-19 vaccine procurement would be tabled in Parliament after the government found

that the costs finalised earlier did not follow the rules set because it did not get approval of the A-GC.

Khairy previously said all decisions on the Covid-19 vaccine procurement were authorised by the cabinet, as well as with the approval of the Finance Ministry.

The former Rembau member of Parliament said the matter also took into account the views of all agencies.

"All decisions are orderly and in accordance with the standard operating procedures for the procurement of the Covid-19 vaccine, the supply of equipment and related service providers to deal with

Covid-19 in Malaysia."

He denied that the acquisition was made without the approval of the attorney-general because all acquisitions made by the government during the Perikatan Nasional administration were presented to the cabinet.

"Therefore, the A-GC will know about it and provide its comments.

"The procurement was signed by the Health Ministry."

On 28 July 2021, the Finance Ministry delegated authority to the Health Ministry

and the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry to finalise the procurement of the Covid-19 vaccines.



Khairy Jamaluddin

	SUBUH	SYURUK	ZUHUR	ASAR	MAGHRIB	ISYAK
	(am)	(am)	(am)	(am)	(am)	(am)
Melaka	6:15	7:25	1:28	4:47	7:28	8:38
Penang	6:25	7:33	1:35	4:55	7:32	8:43
K. Lumpur	6:19	7:26	1:30	4:50	7:29	8:40
Johor Baru	6:08	7:18	1:22	4:41	7:22	8:33
Kuantan	6:12	7:22	1:25	4:44	7:24	8:35
Ipoh	6:22	7:29	1:33	4:53	7:31	8:41

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : NATION

Covid-19 data to be released weekly

DG: Ministry can keep tabs through mandatory notification requirement

Reports by **FATIMAH ZAINAL**
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PETALING JAYA: Starting March, information on Covid-19 cases may be updated on a weekly basis on the Health Ministry's KKMNow website instead of daily.

The ministry has been providing daily Covid-19 data via the website as well as weekly reporting of Covid-19 information via the director-general's media statements.

However, Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah (*pic*) said the ministry was looking into doing away with daily updates on the KKMNow portal.

"We are currently reviewing the frequency of Covid-19 data and information reporting through the KKMNow website.

"Potentially, starting from March, it will be changed from daily to weekly.

"This will allow us to harmonise the frequency for both situational reports of Covid-19 via the KKMNow website and (my) media statements," he told *The Star*.

Dr Noor Hisham said that regardless of any potential change, the monitoring and reporting of Covid-19 data and information would remain the same internally within the various levels of the Health Ministry such as districts, states and headquarters.



He said the Health Ministry was using similar approaches to keeping tabs on Covid-19 as with other endemic diseases such as dengue.

Covid-19 is a notifiable disease under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 (Act 342), which means that positive cases are required by law to be reported to the authorities.

The same goes for other notifiable diseases such as dengue.

"The First Schedule of Act 342 contains the list of notifiable infectious diseases

in Malaysia.

"Both dengue and Covid-19 are notifiable diseases under Act 342.

"Through the mandatory notification requirement of these diseases, the Health Ministry can keep tabs on them.

"Therefore, we can conclude that similar approaches (can be) used for both diseases," he said.

Understanding the importance of transparency and real-time sharing of data, Dr Noor Hisham said the ministry had also been using dedicated portals to share its data with the public, especially on infectious diseases such as Covid-19.

Covid-19 data is available on the KKMNow website, previously known as CovidNow, while dengue data is shared via the iDengue portal.

"Understanding the role played by the community in combating dengue, the Health Ministry in collaboration with the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry established a dedicated website known as iDengue.

"Through this website, we aim to increase the awareness of public and local communities who are residing within active dengue outbreak areas for them to proactively implement preventive and control measures.

"This includes cleaning their dwellings,

finding and destroying Aedes breeding grounds to ensure that their area is free from dengue," said Dr Noor Hisham.

When Covid-19 first hit Malaysian shores in 2020, cases were shared daily by the Health Ministry via social media and press statements.

Dr Noor Hisham also appeared regularly in live press conferences to report on the daily Covid-19 development in Malaysia and answered questions by the media as Malaysians watched on their televisions while on lockdown at home.

The Health Ministry then moved towards sharing all daily information related to Covid-19 through the CovidNow website, which was launched in September 2021.

The portal also included more granular data such as daily tests, patients treated at low-risk treatment and quarantine centres, hospitalisation rates, and intensive care unit and ventilator usage.

The CovidNow website was then expanded and renamed KKMNow in October 2022.

The new website includes everything that was in CovidNow but also has information on health facilities and programmes such as blood donation, health screening and Peka B40 as well as data on contagious diseases.

'Daily updates' no longer necessary as we edge towards endemicity'

PETALING JAYA: The practice of announcing daily Covid-19 infections is no longer relevant, say health experts.

Many of them have held consistent views that daily new cases have lost their relevance with the successful primary vaccination programme and the emergence of the Omicron variant, said Universiti Malaya professor of epidemiology and public health Prof Dr Sanjay Rampal.

He said that the testing of only the more severe cases might be a more prudent use of resources.

"The risk of severe disease has vastly decreased with the vaccination programme and the newer variants.

"There is also no comprehensive testing of all cases, thus the reported cases may represent the tip of the iceberg of all Covid-19 infections.

"We can again look at the influenza programme and adopt sentinel active surveillance as a marker of community burden," he added.

On Feb 6, Chulalongkorn University's top virologist Dr Yong Poovorawan was reported as saying there was no point in counting Covid-

19 cases now as the figure only represented a fraction of the true number of infections.

The Thai expert said his country was currently reporting only the number of hospitalised patients and deaths, adding that Covid-19 was not going anywhere and would soon become another seasonal disease like influenza.

He also expected the World Health Organisation to stop counting Covid-19 cases soon, as the situation in China improved and the severity of the disease has been declining over time.

Universiti Putra Malaysia epidemiologist and biostatistician Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the move to stop daily updates in favour of weekly updates would be a timely one.

"After almost a year since we had a strict SOP (standard operating procedure), we have observed that cases continue their downward trend despite many concerns about new strains of Covid-19.

"In addition, our healthcare system continues to function as usual," she said.

Dr Malina said Malaysia had clearly passed

the transitional state in which possible threats of incoming waves of Covid-19 infection were no longer the case.

"Does this mean that Malaysia's transition to endemicity is going well? In my opinion, yes," she added.

Public health expert Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said the move to stop announcing the daily number of cases was feasible provided that the caseload stayed on the downward trend, especially the number of hospital admissions and deaths.

She said these were the indicators as infections, positivity rate, and mild cases were expected during the ongoing endemicity transition.

"We can't be alarmed with just cases only, but we should concentrate more on severe cases, Long Covid and the presence of adverse reactions post-vaccines.

"These are indicators that have been, and need to be, continued by the government.

"These data need not be disclosed to the public as daily cases," she said.

Prof Sharifa Ezat said Malaysia's "commend-

able" vaccine programme had somehow protected the population from the severe impact of Covid-19 in the last months of 2022 and now.

"New cases are not alarming anymore. Hopefully, we won't be exposed to new and virulent Variants of Concern (VOC)," she added.

She said those who have not yet been boosted should go ahead and get the vaccine for better protection.

Universiti Malaya Tropical Infectious Diseases Research and Education Centre director Prof Dr Szazly Abu Bakar said in his estimation, Covid-19 is already being treated as other endemic diseases although this has not been officially announced.

He said for endemic diseases, cases are usually only highlighted when there is an outbreak.

"Otherwise, cases are just kept in the data bank somewhere in the Health Ministry reporting system.

"Doctors are also obligated to input into a system for selected, listed infectious diseases that they diagnosed," he said.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NATION

Still smoking despite ban

Many continue to light up at bus stops, parks and eateries

By LO TERN CHERN
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GEORGE TOWN: Despite the smoking ban in many places since 2015, some smokers here continue to light up.

Due to lax enforcement and the general lack of awareness, many are still happily puffing away in restricted areas along the Batu Ferringhi tourism belt and George Town Unesco World Heritage Site.

Both places have been gazetted as smoke-free zones and smoking is not allowed even on the streets in the open air, but a check showed that smokers still light up.

"Smokers are smoking everywhere, even in eateries here. It doesn't seem like a smoking ban exists at all," said Tony Montaro, 45, who operates a cafe by the beach in Batu Ferringhi.

Fortunately for Montaro, his small open-air cafe of only six tables means customers are just steps away from the open beach.

"They smoke at the beach. Not at my tables. They are aware of the smoking ban within eateries.

"I've got no issues with smokers and have never found cigarette butts on the floor," he said.

In September 2019, Penang gazetted the Batu Ferringhi tourism area as a smoke-free zone.

The smoke-free zone begins at Tanjung Bungah's Penang Floating



Customers posted: A 'No Smoking' sign is displayed in a coffee shop in George Town, Penang. — K.T. GOH/The Star

Mosque and ends at Bayview Beach Resort along Jalan Batu Ferringhi.

Smokers are not supposed to take a puff anywhere here though hotels, restaurants and other outlets may designate smoking rooms.

Tanjung Bungah assemblyman Zairil Khir Johari called on all smokers to be considerate of others.

"At the same time, if there is to be enforcement, then the local council

should provide designated smoking areas as it would be unfair if it didn't," he said.

At the heritage site in George Town, many were seen smoking in public areas such as bus stops, parks and along five-foot ways, as well as within eateries such as cafes, food courts and roadside stalls.

Coffeeshop owner Ryan Tan, 30, gets his share of smokers seated at

tables placed outside his establishment.

"They don't do it inside but smoke when dining at tables outside... they will stop when I advise them not to," he said.

Shaiful Almuddin Md Isa, who runs a Malay restaurant in Campbell Street, politely tells patrons that smoking is not allowed at his place.

Smokers will then walk out to the streets, even though smoking is not allowed on the streets in the heritage enclave.

Hameediyah Restaurant, the oldest nasi kandar restaurant in the country, encounters smokers lighting up near its washrooms.

Its director Muhammad Riyaz Syed Ibrahim said as much as his advised customers not to smoke, it still happens regularly.

"If we catch them doing it, we politely apologise and explain that smoking is not allowed," he said.

Northeast district health officer Datin Dr Azidah Abdul Manan said if people were caught smoking in eateries, both the smoker and premises' owners would be compounded.

"They will both be in trouble as it is banned.

"It is the owners' duty to tell customers that they cannot smoke.

"If we catch them and the owners say the person was warned, it is on the owners to show us proof that they did warn the customer," she said.

AKHBAR : THE SUN

MUKA SURAT : 2

RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS



Lukanisman (front row, second from left) enjoying a silat performance before flagging off participants of the fun run in Shah Alam yesterday. - **BERNAMAPIC**

Have more public programmes, Health agencies urged

SHAH ALAM: Agencies and departments under the Health Ministry are encouraged to hold more interactive programmes, to provide exposure to the public on their respective roles, said its deputy minister Lukanisman Awang Sauni.

He cited the example of the Institute for Medical Research (IMR) 123 Fun Run, which was

held yesterday, aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle.

He said such programmes help to promote IMR as an institution which carries out research on health.

"A total of 1,500 participants took part in the 7.30am run, which indirectly introduced IMR (to the public). I do not think all of them knew about

the institution.

"Hence, I also encourage agencies under the ministry to hold similar programmes, including in the suburbs, to further introduce the IMR brand."

He was speaking after the fun run held in conjunction with Shah Alam Car Free Day at Dataran Kemerdekaan Shah Alam. - Bernama