

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 26

RUANGAN : LOKAL

Putrajaya: Jumlah kes demam denggi pada minggu epidemiologi ketiga tahun ini (ME3/23) iaitu dari 15 Januari hingga 21 Januari menurun lapan peratus atau 201 kes kepada 2,319 kes berbanding 2,520 kes pada minggu sebelumnya.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah dalam satu

80 lokaliti hotspot denggi dilaporkan

kenyataan semalam berkata, satu kematian akibat komplikasi demam denggi dilaporkan pada ME3/23.

Kumulatif kes demam denggi yang dilaporkan sehingga kini adalah 7,058 kes berbanding 2,165 kes dalam tempoh sama pada 2022,

iaitu peningkatan 226 peratus atau 4,893 kes, dengan tiga kematian akibat komplikasi denggi dilaporkan berbanding sifar kematian bagi tempoh sama pada 2022.

"Sebanyak 80 lokaliti hotspot dilaporkan pada minggu

ini (ME3/23) berbanding 67 lokaliti hotspot pada minggu sebelumnya," katanya ia membabitkan 50 hotspot di Selangor, 14 di Sabah, sembilan di Kuala Lumpur dan Putrajaya serta tujuh di Pulau Pinang.

Beliau berkata, surveilan

chikungunya merekodkan 11 kes pada ME3/23 dengan masing-masing tiga kes dari Kedah, Pulau Pinang dan Selangor serta dua kes dari Perak dengan jumlah kumulatif kes chikungunya sehingga kini 47 kes.

"Bagi surveilan zika, se-

banyak 150 sampel darah dan satu sampel urin dijalankan saringan zika dan hasilnya negatif," katanya.

Situasi denggi terkini dan carian status denggi di kawasan kediaman, tempat kerja serta kawasan lain akan dilawati dapat disemak melalui laman sesawang iDengue (<https://idengue.mysa.gov.my/>).

AKHBAR : KOSMO
 MUKA SURAT : 16
 RUANGAN : NEGARA

Restoran terkenal tetapi pengotor

KEMAMAN – Sebuah restoran makanan segera terkenal di daerah ini dikompaun RM1,000 ekoran gagal memastikan kebersihan hingga menyajikan burger dan ayam goreng tercemar kepada pelanggan.

Kompaun di bawah Akta 35 (1) (B) Peraturan-Peraturan Kebersihan Makanan 2009 tersebut dikeluarkan dalam satu serbuan di premis berkenaan pada pukul 4 petang kelmarin.

Serbuan oleh enam anggota penguat kuasa Unit Keselamatan dan Kualiti Makanan Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah Kemaman dibuat selepas menerima aduan daripada seorang pengadu yang mendakwa menerima roti burger berkulat dan ayam goreng mentah.

Pemeriksaan lanjut mendapati bekas meletak sos tidak diselenggara dengan baik selain kebersihan tandas dan dapur juga kurang memuaskan.

Sistem perangkap minyak turut didapati tidak diselenggara dengan betul dan longkang di belakang premis tersebut kotor.

Sehubungan itu, pengurusan restoran makanan segera berkenaan telah diarahkan un-



PIHAK berkuasa membuat pemeriksaan di sebuah restoran makanan segera di Kemaman semalam.

tuk meningkatkan kebersihan dalam tempoh 14 hari selaras Seksyen 10 Akta Makanan 1983.

Kelmarin *Kosmo!* melaporkan seorang wanita dikenali sebagai Dhia Fadhila mendakwa menerima roti burger yang sudah berkulat dari sebuah restoran makanan segera terkenal di daerah ini pada Selasa lalu.

Dia juga mendakwa ayam goreng dibeli itu juga tidak masak sepenuhnya dan berbau seakan-akan stok lama.

Pendedahan wanita itu kemudian telah mendapat pelbagai reaksi daripada orang ramai yang berpendapat tindakan tersebut sebagai tidak bertanggungjawab dan menganiaya pelanggan.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 8

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Genap tiga tahun negara dibelenggu wabak Covid-19

SHAH ALAM - Genap tiga tahun negara dibelenggu dengan Covid-19, Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah merakamkan penghargaan kepada kesemua staf barisan hadapan yang bertungkus-lumus semenjak kes pertama mula direkodkan pada 25 Januari 2020.

Dalam satu perkongsian di Facebooknya pada Khamis, Hisham berkata, sepanjang tempoh itu, negara telah mencatatkan sebanyak 5,035,073 kes keseluruhan dengan 36,932 kes kematian dan seramai 4,988,143 orang telah sembuh.

Menurutnya, walaupun negara kini berada dalam fasa peralihan pandemik ke endemik, rakyat perlu terus mematuhi saranan kesihatan yang diberikan.

"Patuhilah saranan serta nasihat-

nasihat kesihatan yang sering ditekankan iaitu elakkan 3S iaitu kawasan sesak dan sempit serta bersembang atau bertutur dalam jarak yang dekat.

AKTIVITI MINGGU INI

28 JANUARI 2023

- Teater Muzikal Kanak-kanak Ala-Lib Ala-Lob di Dewan Agung Tuanku Canselor (DATC), UITM Shah Alam bermula jam 3 petang dan 8.30 malam.
- Minda Kreatif Sasterawan Negara bersempena dengan Hadiah Sastera Darul Ridzuan Ke-7 2022 di Port, Ipoh bermula jam 10 pagi.
- Bimbingan menghasilkan manuskrip novel remaja untuk diterbitkan bertempat di IPG Kampus Ipoh, Perak bermula jam 8 pagi hingga 2 petang.

29 JANUARI 2023

- Program Gema Puisi
- Pemuisi, bertempat di Studio Pemuisi, Ampang bermula jam 4 petang.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 1

RUANGAN : MUKA HADAPAN

Healing with the years

Three years have passed since the first case of Covid-19 was detected in the country. Since then, it has been a story of heartbreak and grit as 37,000 people died, with half a million infected. The country has done well to bring the number of cases down to just over 200. Survivors tell of their struggles as health experts say we must stay vigilant. > See reports on pages 4 and 5 by **FATIMAH ZAINAL** and **IMRAN HILMY**



Thank you!

(From right) Nür Sheryna Afina Mohd Sufian, 21, Afiq Razi Abdul Razak, 20, Nur Nazifah Fazari, 21, and Nurul Nabilah Mahdihi, 22, mark the anniversary of Malaysia's first Covid-19 case with a salute to healthcare frontliners for their service and sacrifices in front of a mural in Shah Alam.

Photo by IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

AKHBAR : THE STAR
 MUKA SURAT : 4
 RUANGAN : MUKA HADAPAN

Three years on, the battle is not yet over

But through tears and fears, things are getting better

By FATIMAH ZAINAL
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PETALING JAYA: Three years after the first Covid-19 case in Malaysia was detected, the country is in a far better place than it was at the beginning of the pandemic.

However, the virus is here to stay, say health experts.

Although there are now ways to treat and fight the virus, Malaysians must never let their guard down.

Prof Dr Moy Foong Ming of Universiti Malaya, a public health expert, said Malaysia has been one of the best countries in managing Covid-19 and has handled the pandemic well despite some initial hiccups.

"With the commitment and sacrifice of frontliners, namely those from healthcare, defence, security and essential services, we now have low hospital admissions, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) usage, and Covid-19 deaths," she said.

Prof Moy said that while public awareness of Covid-19 health protocols was high with the constant reminders from the government and media, people should practise extra vigilance by keeping their vaccination status up to date.

"Currently, the uptake of first and second boosters among the elderly is only 71.6% and 5.9%.

"The elderly and the high-risk groups should take their boosters to prevent severe symptoms. We know the effectiveness of the vaccine will wane over time," she said.

Public health expert Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said the high number of deaths was unavoidable at one point as there was a severe health resource shortage and a lack of facilities, as well as proper isolation centres.



"At the time, we were highly exposed, as not many were vaccinated, and we were hit by the Delta variant, which has high virulence and high transmissibility.

"The enforced movement control order (MCO) was the right move as it helped in infection mitigation," she said.

Dr Sharifa Ezat said that as the country approaches endemicity, there was still a need to be wary of new variants.

"There could be new Variants of Concern (VOC), which can be more contagious or have higher virulence.

"We also need to keep track of local variants circulating and if a possible variant is in the country," she said.

Besides Covid-19, Malaysia's burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, hypertension and stroke are also high.

"Thus the people need to monitor their own diseases and try to stay

healthy by making better choices such as avoiding smoking, going for routine blood glucose checks, regular pap smears, and so on," she said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia epidemiologist and biostatistician Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said Malaysia success in managing the pandemic was even more remarkable considering the political crises that saw three prime ministers in three years.

"Even though we had many challenges from those who disagreed with the pandemic management, vaccines and some regulations, the majority of us managed to stay together, providing full support for the excellent handling of the pandemic," she said.

Dr Malina said the Health Ministry did an excellent job and also praised the National Security Council (NSC), which took charge during the pandemic.

Universiti Malaya professor of epidemiology and public health

Prof Dr Sanjay Rampal said while the Health Ministry responded well to the initial pandemic, future resilience would be highly dependent on investments in public health and healthcare systems.

"Improving disaster resilience and strengthening public health and healthcare systems will be more cost-effective ways to prepare for future health threats," he said.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah expressed his appreciation to all frontline workers who worked tirelessly during the pandemic and expressed his condolences to those who lost family members or friends due to Covid-19.

He said three years have passed in the blink of an eye.

The first case was detected on Jan 25, 2020, when it was still known as 2019-nCoV.

As of Jan 24, Malaysia had reported a total of 5,035,073 cases, 36,932 deaths, and 4,988,143 recoveries.

"We are still in the phase of transition to endemicity, so obey the recommendations and health advice that is often stressed, namely avoiding the 3S (Sesak or crowded; Semptit or confined space; Sembang Dekat of close conversation). Practise the 3W (Wash, Wear, Warn) too.

"Continue to practise TRIIS (Test, Report, Isolate, Inform and Seek) and get the primary dose or booster dose of the Covid-19 vaccine," he said in a statement yesterday.

Dr Noor Hisham was named chair of the World Health Organization's Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response in recognition of his efforts in managing the pandemic.



For more stories:
See page 7 & 9

More healthcare personnel needed, report finds

By RAGANANTHINI
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PETALING JAYA: The ratio of doctors to the population in 2021 was one to 420, revealed the Health Ministry's Health Facts 2022 report.

In terms of headcount, there were a total of 77,755 doctors in 2021, including 9,578 House Officers.

The Human Resources segment of the report showed that the profession to population ratio for dentists was 1:2,597 while pharmacists were 1:1,758.

As for nurses, there was one nurse available for a population of 283.

Meanwhile, there was one optometrist to serve a population of 13,860 while for opticians, there was one for a population of 13,109.

The ministry's 2022 Annual Report said as at Dec 31, 2021, 93.1% or 256,147 of the 274,987 positions



Safety first: Healthcare workers overseeing a screening test in Kampung Baru in 2020. — AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

available in the Health Ministry were filled.

"There were 32,713 permanent Medical Officers in 2021, comprising 6,258 Medical Specialists;

26,392 Medical Officers (MOs) and 63 permanent House Officers (HOs) Grade UD41 (HOs remained in housemanship training and were appointed before December 2016),"

the report said.

Meanwhile, a total of 39,389 Contract Officers were appointed, which consist of various schemes including Medical Officer, Dentist, Pharmacist, Dental Technologist, Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist.

Some 14,000 healthcare personnel were appointed to various services schemes on contract basis to assist with the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These personnel included nurses, medical assistants and radiographers.

"In order to fulfill the service requirements and management of the Covid-19 pandemic throughout Malaysia, MOH has mobilised existing personnel and contract appointments to assist shortage of human resource in affected states due to sudden surge of Covid-19 cases," it said.

In total, 3,787 personnel had been mobilised across states

throughout the year.

The mobilisation initiative also involved personnel from other agencies and ministries at federal and state levels," it added.

Several medical groups such as Hartal Doktor Kontrak and healthcare workers have highlighted the issue of the manpower crunch in the healthcare sector, particularly at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic when hospitals were bursting at its seams and resources were overstretched.

Healthcare groups have also called for the absorption of contract healthcare workers into permanent services.

Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa had said on Jan 6 that a total of 4,914 permanent positions would be available in the Health Ministry in 2023.

She said that 4,263 positions would be for medical officers, 335 openings for dentists and 316 for pharmacists.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
 MUKA SURAT : 5
 RUANGAN : MUKA HADAPAN

Three years of pandemic

Jan 25, 2020:
 Covid detected in Malaysia (3 cases)

27 March, 2020:
 First EMCO in two areas in Simpang Renggam, Johor - 1st EMCO

18 March, 2020 – 3 May 2020:
 MCO

4 May, 2020 – 9 June 2020:
 CMCO

10 June, 2020 – 31 March 2021:
 RMCO



Oct 24, 2020:
 Daily cases surpass 3-digits (1,228 new cases)

Jan 30, 2021:
 First wave (peaking at 5,728 new cases)

Aug 26, 2021:
 First major wave (peaking at 24,599 new cases)

Mar 5, 2022:
 Second major wave due to Omicron (peaking at 33,406 new cases)

Jan 25, 2023:
 Rapid decrease in daily cases (currently 132 new cases)



Number of new infections remain low in Penang

By IMRAN HILMY
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GEORGE TOWN: The number of reported Covid-19 cases is relatively low here, with only one out of 92 mukim (sub-districts) in the state declared a red zone.

A total of 235 cases were reported from Jan 12 to Jan 25, including six new cases recorded on Wednesday.

During the two-week period, no cases were reported in 50 out of the 92 sub-districts.

Only mukim 15 in central Seberang Prai is in red with 82 reported cases.

The island's northeast district, for example, only recorded 29 cases in two weeks despite being the state's most densely populated area and home to many tourist spots.

The data does not include imported cases and those detected in prisons and detention depots.

Health expert Dr Kumitaa Theva Das said the low number of Covid-19 infections might not reflect the real situation even though the decline in Covid-19 cases was in line with the global trend.

The Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) virologist said chances were some who tested positive might not report to the authorities.

"Some may not test because they are asymptomatic and do not realise they have been infected."

"There are also those who are symptomatic, but with the help of vaccines in keeping the viral load low, they may have gotten a false negative upon testing," she said.

Dr Kumitaa said Omicron sub-variants that many were wor-

ried about, such as the BF.7, never caused an increase in cases in Malaysia, while XBB.1.5 has not been detected in Malaysia yet despite a revival in global travel.

"We can't let our guard down as those in the high-risk group could still get severe symptoms if infected," she added.

On a positive note, Dr Kumitaa said the low number of cases could be due

to Malaysians still being cautious, as many are still masking up indoors or avoiding travel and crowded places.

"The vaccination rate, including the high double boosted figure, is also the reason in keeping the Covid-19 cases low," she said.

Dr Kumitaa said one must still report the infection to the authorities as this could help them recognise new symptoms or changes to

the duration of the infection that may be indicative of new variants.

"It would help the health authority and experts to identify hotspots or locations where the infection is found, or whether it is seasonal."

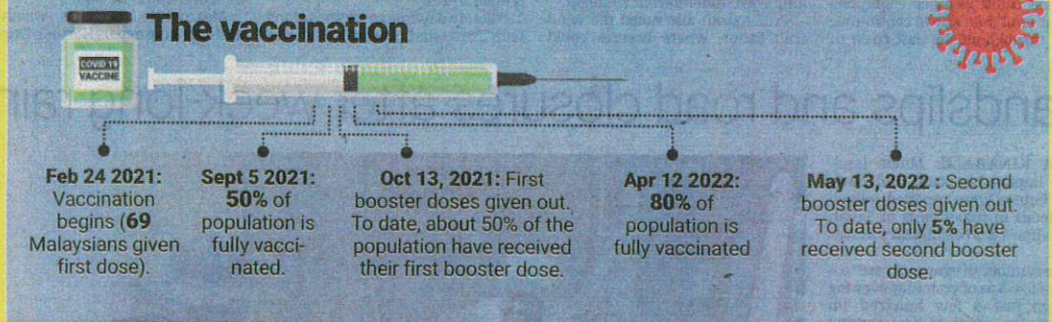
"This information would help protect and prevent the public from infection in the long run," she added.

Dr Kumitaa said being aware of the importance of vaccination as

well as practising good hygiene have brought the daily numbers down to two digits.

"Hopefully, it will not be too long before Malaysia's cases are down to a single digit."

"A pandemic will only shift to an endemic once the disease has become more stable, manageable and is spreading at an expected level," she said.



Source: news.google.com/covid19

TheStar graphics

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 7

RUANGAN : NATION

Contract pharmacists threaten walkout if not given consideration

By RAGANANTHINI
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PETALING JAYA: Contract pharmacists have urged the government to do away with the interview procedure for permanent positions, adding that they will stage a walkout if their absorption into the civil service is not given enough importance.

A spokesman for the Hartal Pharmacists Kontrak group also questioned the lower quota for permanent positions for pharmacists compared to doctors.

"If we are still being discriminated against and not given due importance when it comes to permanent jobs, I think we will stage a walkout,

but before that, we are requesting that the Health Ministry (MOH) give us permanent jobs right away rather than conduct interviews again and again," he said while speaking on condition of anonymity.

He questioned if a 15-minute interview could do justice to their performance on the job for the past seven years.

"It is a waste of the interviewer's time as well, because we have been working for six to seven years in MOH. Do we still need to be interviewed?" he asked.

Instead of an interview, he claims that bosses and superiors will be able to give a proper evaluation of a candidate's performance and whether they would qualify for a permanent job.

He claimed that there are only some 86 pharmacists from the 2016/2017 batch who have remained with the ministry due to their loyalty.

The movement was formed on Jan 21, after pharmacists from the 2016/2017 batch did not get clear-cut answers from the ministry and the Public Services Commission (PSC) on why those from the batch were not invited for the next interview session despite being the oldest batch on contract.

The spokesman added that doctors from the 2016 batch had been called for interviews.

"When some of us asked the PSC and the Health Ministry, we were told that we had been given chances twice previously, but when they

called us for the first time in February 2020, there were vacancies for 30 pharmacists nationwide and they called almost 600 of us (for the interview)," he claimed.

He went on to add that for the second interview in June 2022, there were 400 vacancies for 1,500 applicants.

Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa said on Jan 6 that a total of 4,914 permanent positions will be available in the Health Ministry in 2023.

She said that 4,263 positions would be for medical officers, 335 would be for dentists, and 316 would be for pharmacists.

Commenting on this, the spokesman said the composition of permanent posts for pharmacists was only

about 8% of the openings for doctors.

"And when all these doctors get their placements, do they think the understaffed pharmacies can cater to the patients treated by the more than 4,200 doctors?" he asked.

"At the end of the day, patients will complain about us and blame us for the late distribution of medicines, but the issue is that we lack the manpower," he said.

The movement, which started with about 100 members, has gained traction on social media.

The movement comes after the Hartal Doktor Kontrak was formed in 2021. Hartal Doktor Kontrak even went on to stage a nationwide walkout in July 2021 in protest of the contract system.

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 13

RUANGAN : VIEWS

Proposal for a shift in dengue control strategy

HERE we go again – dengue cases are on the rise and are expected to peak this year with the possibility of the case count surpassing last year's 66,000, "Dengue cases set to spike" (*The Star*, Jan 16; online at <https://bit.ly/3WK0Y3D>). The surge began in October 2022 and is expected to peak by March this year.

As a public health expert who has been involved directly in the state dengue control programme for more than 10 years, these two- to three-year cyclical trends will recur despite the various strategies implemented to control and prevent this vector-borne disease.

The National Dengue Control Programme is one of the few national communicable disease control programmes that have not achieved their objectives. Key reasons behind the failure of the programme, which was introduced in the mid-1970s (almost 50 years), are urbanisation, increased population density, enhanced people movement and, most importantly, poor environmental sanitation.

The main risk factor in dengue occurrence is the environment



where the *Aedes* mosquito breeds. Because of this, I firmly recommend that the dengue environmental management control programme be spearheaded by the Local Government Development Ministry at the national level and local authorities at the district level. This will allow the Health Ministry to direct its resources to more specific roles of early detec-

tion and treatment of dengue patients, dengue case investigation and the epidemiological evaluation of the various dengue control activities implemented by the other agencies.

It is hoped that environmental cleanliness will be given a further boost by the agencies that are already entrusted with this responsibility. Under this initiative, den-

gue occurrence can be used as a proxy key performance indicator (KPI) for the effectiveness of the various environmental cleanliness initiatives of these agencies. This is similar to the initiative in Singapore where dengue control activities are under the ministry of environment, which has wide enforcement powers.

Continuing with the current strategies that have basically been unchanged since the 1970s will probably result in the same dengue pattern in the coming years.

Finally, I hope the Health Ministry will improve its risk communication strategies to the community. For example, its latest press release on dengue (dated Jan 25, 2023) was 15 pages thick and packed with technical information that is more relevant to students doing their master's in Public Health rather than the general community.

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consultant
Klang