

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NATIONAL

Covid-19 vaccinations readily available nationwide

► While no mass programme planned, efforts still ongoing to protect vulnerable groups from severe infections: Ministry

■ BY FAIZ RUZMAN
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The Covid-19 vaccinations remain readily available across Malaysia, with 202 active vaccination centres nationwide and a remaining stockpile of 183,784 doses, according to the Health Ministry.

Between Feb 17 and May 18 this year, a total of 8,246 individuals were vaccinated, including 1,711 with comorbidities or weakened immune systems and 125 healthcare workers.

In a written response to *theSun*, the ministry said while Malaysia is no longer pushing mass vaccinations, efforts are still being directed toward protecting vulnerable groups from severe Covid-19 infections.

"Efforts remain active, as shown by recent weekly data where over 8,000 individuals, including many from high-risk categories, received vaccinations," the ministry stated.

"This ensures ongoing safeguarding of those most susceptible in the community."

It also clarified that there are no plans to roll out a new booster dose but stressed that Covid-19 vaccines are still available and recommended for high-risk individuals.

"The Health Ministry consistently advises high-risk groups to stay updated with their vaccinations to reduce the risk of severe illness."

It said Covid-19 continues to be classified as a notifiable disease under

the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988, requiring all public and private healthcare providers to report cases through the eNotification system.

These reports are tracked in real time to enable swift intervention, it added.

The Health Ministry also said the Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre monitors media and public reports of potential outbreaks and verifies them before including them in official data.

"Risk communication campaigns via MySejahtera and social media platforms are ongoing, aimed at countering misinformation and keeping the public informed about new developments," it added.

Neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Singapore have recently seen a spike in Covid-19 cases, driven by the emergence of more infectious subvariants linked to the Omicron strain.

Between May 25 and 30, Thailand reported 65,880 new infections and three fatalities. In Singapore, estimated cases rose to 14,200 between April 27 and May 3, up from 11,100 the previous week, with 133 individuals requiring hospitalisation.

In Malaysia, Malacca saw a notable rise in infections, with a 20% increase in cases during Epidemiological Week 23 (June 1-7), recording 93 new infections.

Amid these rising cases, *theSun*

spoke to Malaysian Medical Association president Datuk Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira, who expressed concern over a shortage of healthcare personnel, warning that it could affect the quality and timeliness of patient care.

"Covid-19 still poses a serious risk, especially among the vulnerable. We must stay vigilant," he said.

"We are confident that the Health Ministry and its agencies are taking appropriate steps to respond swiftly if cases rise again."

On May 29, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad reported a 72% surge in Covid-19 cases during Epidemiological Week 21 (May 18-24), with 1,971 infections recorded - up from 1,145 the previous week.

"The Health Ministry continues to enhance Covid-19 surveillance to ensure early detection and rapid response to any increase in cases," he stated in a post on X.

In a follow-up update on June 4, Dzulkefly revealed that the JN.1 subvariant is currently the most prevalent strain in Malaysia, accounting for 17% of detected cases.

Other notable variants include XEC (7.9%), KP3 (5.2%), and both KP3.1.1 and LB.1 at 3.2% each.

While the World Health Organisation has assessed the global risk from JN.1 as low, Dzulkefly cautioned that its high transmissibility could still lead to a rise in cases, particularly during colder seasons or in populations with low immunity.



The Health Ministry consistently advises high-risk groups to stay updated with their vaccinations to reduce the risk of severe illness. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NATIONAL

4 TUESDAY | JUNE 17, 2025
NATIONAL

THE SUN M/S 4 NATIONAL 17/6/2025 (SELASA)



Trending video highlights struggles of young doctors

➤ Surgeon's blunt advice resonates with healthcare workers facing burnout, low pay and uncertain futures in M'sia's healthcare system

■ BY HARITH KAMAL
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: A highly viewed TikTok video posted by a Malaysian who claimed to be a surgeon has reignited debate over the harsh realities faced by young doctors in the country.

In the clip, the surgeon advises top Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia scorers not to pursue medicine for money or job security, a message that has struck a chord with junior doctors and medical students who are grappling with long hours, low pay and limited career prospects.

The video, which has been widely shared on social media, has sparked renewed calls for long-overdue reform in Malaysia's healthcare system.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Prof Dr Muhammad Saiful Bahri Yusoff said while the message may seem discouraging, it reflects sentiments that are increasingly common among early-career healthcare professionals.

"The video reflects a growing appetite, especially among young professionals and the public, for more open and honest conversations about the medical profession.

"Though its tone may seem blunt, it's grounded in real, lived experiences that deserve recognition," he said.

Muhamad Saiful acknowledged that medical training in Malaysia is both rigorous and demanding.

House officers often work more than 60 hours a week and are frequently posted far from their families and support systems.

He noted that these challenges are not unique to Malaysia but are now receiving more attention and, in some cases, are under review.

He added that the contract system, originally introduced to address the oversupply of medical graduates, has instead contributed to job insecurity and uncertainty around career progression.

"Career progression remains possible, but it can feel uncertain or delayed depending on the speciality and availability of posts."



Muhamad Saiful said medicine remains a noble and rewarding career, though younger generations are redefining what makes a profession worthwhile.

Despite these challenges, Muhamad Saiful said medicine remains a noble and rewarding career, though younger generations are redefining what makes a profession worthwhile.

"Today's graduates increasingly prioritise work-life balance, autonomy and mental well-being, alongside income and job security," he said.

"It's not that medicine is less rewarding, but that the definition of 'rewarding' has become broader."

To better prepare future doctors, UPM has introduced initiatives that go beyond academic training, focusing on student well-being, leadership and real-world readiness.

One such programme is the Shadow House Officer Training System, a simulation designed to expose final-year students to the realities of hospital work.

Still, Muhamad Saiful warned that Malaysia's ongoing doctor shortage, particularly in rural areas and critical specialities, stems not from a lack of graduates but from maldistribution and retention issues.

"This is a classic case of a maldistribution paradox. We're producing more doctors but many are concentrated in urban hospitals while rural areas remain underserved."

The issue is compounded by a decline in

graduate numbers.

In April last year, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the number of house officers in public hospitals had halved since 2019.

"There was a time when we had up to 7,000 medical graduates annually. Now, it's just over 3,000," he said.

"As a result, housemen are facing heavier workloads due to the shortage of manpower."

Health systems specialist Dr Khor Swee Kheng said the issue reflects a broader talent shift across essential professions.

"Medicine - even law, accounting, engineering and science - may be losing appeal among youths, who are increasingly drawn to finance, tech or social media careers," he said.

"This is a decades-long talent allocation challenge that needs an all-of-Malaysia response," he added, calling for stronger collaboration between the Education, Human Resources and Health ministries, as well as economic planners and the private sector.

Despite the challenges, Muhamad Saiful said the public reaction to the video signals hope.

"This isn't a sign of decline. It shows that people still care deeply about the profession and want to see it thrive."

THE SUN M/S 4 NATIONAL 17/6/2025 (SELASA)

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NATIONAL

THE SUN MYS4 NATIONAL 17/6/2025 (SELASA) Young M'sians choose healthcare to make a difference

PETALING JAYA: Amid rising concerns over long hours, low pay and job insecurity in Malaysia's healthcare system, young Malaysians continue to pursue careers in medicine, driven by purpose, tempered with caution and anchored by quiet resolve.

For 18-year-old Nur Hayfaa Qistina, a Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology student at a private university, the decision was never about prestige but about making a difference.

"I've always been drawn to the 'invisible heroes' behind healthcare," she said.

"Most people focus on doctors and nurses, but I was fascinated by the silent backbone of diagnoses – lab technologists."

Her interest deepened after a family member suffered complications linked to a lab oversight.

"That moment stuck with me. I realised I

wanted to be part of the system, not in the spotlight, but ensuring test results are accurate, timely and potentially life-saving."

It is this quiet impact that motivates her.

"I don't need public praise to feel fulfilled. I just want to know I made a difference, that my work helped someone get the right diagnosis or treatment."

Still, she often faces scepticism from friends, relatives and even strangers online who question her choice.

"People ask, 'Why not choose something more glamorous or better paying?' But I'm not here for that," she said.

"I want to understand the science behind sickness. I want my work to matter. That means more to me than chasing money."

For others, such as a third-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery student who

preferred to be known only as Sofia, the decision to pursue medicine is just as heartfelt — though tempered with a sense of realism.

"I still believe medicine is meaningful. But I've heard enough to know the reality isn't always easy."

After numerous conversations with junior doctors, and reading about burnout and the lack of permanent placements, Sofia acknowledges the road ahead is daunting.

"It's not that I regret my decision, I'm just more prepared now. I know it'll take more than passion to survive this career."

Still, her conviction remains.

"I chose this path because I want to care for others. But we also need a system that cares for us, with stronger support, clearer career pathways, and better mental health protection." – by **Harith Kamal**

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA SURAT : 15

RUANGAN : VIEWS

THE STAR MISTIS VIEWS 17/6/2025 (SELASA)

DENGUE is no longer a seasonal nuisance – it has become a year-round public health crisis in Asean, with rising infection rates, unpredictable outbreaks, and worsening economic consequences. According to the Asean Biodiaspora Virtual Centre and the World Health Organisation, more than 800,000 cases were reported in Asean countries in 2024, with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand recording some of the highest numbers.

But beyond the hospital wards, dengue is draining our economies. A 2021 study published in *The Lancet* estimated the economic burden of dengue in South-East Asia exceeds US\$1bil (RM4.7bil) annually, factoring in healthcare costs, lost productivity, school absenteeism, and vector control efforts.

In the Philippines, the government spends more than US\$350mil (RM1.485bil) annually on dengue-related public health measures. Thailand faces over US\$220mil (RM931mil) in losses each year. In Malaysia, which has

This disease is costing Asean billions



Photo: cdc.gov

one of the highest incidence rates of dengue per capita in Asean, the disease has cost an estimated US\$175mil (RM822mil) a year, according to the Health Ministry and the Asian Development Bank. This includes hospitalisation, outpatient care, vector control operations, and productivity losses due to worker absenteeism.

These figures are projected to rise sharply with accelerating

urbanisation, cross-border mobility, unplanned construction, and climate variability. Yet Asean's response remains fragmented. While individual countries mount national campaigns, there is no region-wide early warning system, coordinated mosquito control strategy, or shared funding for vaccine research. Dengue does not respect borders – and neither should our response.

Asean must move beyond declarations and initiate a regional dengue control task force integrated with shared data systems, regional stockpiles of diagnostic kits and mosquito control supplies, and co-funded community education campaigns. Vector surveillance must be digitised, and the private sector must be engaged to reduce breeding grounds.

The war against dengue is also a fight to protect regional economic stability. Every dollar lost to dengue is a dollar lost from trade, productivity, and national development. Asean cannot afford to treat dengue as a local health issue; it is a regional economic emergency demanding collective, sustained action.

**ASSOC PROF DR NAZRI
CHE DOM**
Senior lecturer
Faculty of Health Sciences
Universiti Teknologi Mara