

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NATIONAL

App to facilitate smarter healthcare product purchases

► Platform would ensure consumers aware of medicine prices as steep variations occur at private clinics and pharmacies

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PETALING JAYA: A mobile application which allows users to compare the prices of medications at private clinics and hospitals could be the ideal solution to help consumers make informed healthcare decisions, says economist Prof Emeritus Barjoiyi Bardai.

He said such a platform would ensure consumers are aware of the prices of medicines in the market before making a purchase.

"At the moment, medicine prices at over-the-counter pharmacies vary significantly. In the Klang Valley alone, there are many pharmacies, and since prices were previously unregulated, some were selling medicines at double the price compared with competitors.

"This should not continue, as consumers who fail to diligently compare prices may incur unnecessary financial losses," he told *theSun*.

Barjoiyi said the government should consider developing the app in line with the enforcement of the mandatory price display under the Price Control and Anti-Profitsteering Act 2011 (Act 723), which came into effect on May 1.

"Just like pharmacies, private healthcare facilities also charge varying prices for medication. Unless someone visits several clinics or hospitals, it's hard to know which one offers more affordable services.

"But if there were an app that allowed users to compare treatment and medication costs at nearby facilities, it would empower consumers to make smarter choices. It might also encourage clinics to standardise pricing to remain competitive."

During a TikTok Live session by a senior Health Ministry officer who discussed the mandatory display of medicine prices in private clinics and pharmacies last Wednesday, it was revealed that a mobile app is in development to help users compare medicine prices across private clinics and pharmacies.

Barjoiyi, however, was puzzled over the opposition from some healthcare groups to the implementation in the private sector.

"Displaying prices has long been mandatory across retail sectors, from hypermarkets to market traders. Pharmacies are also required to



Barjoiyi says an app that allows users to compare treatment and medication costs would empower consumers and encourage outlets to standardise pricing. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

comply. So it's unclear why certain groups in the private healthcare sector are objecting to this move," he said.

The mandate to display drug prices at general practice clinics has sparked concerns that it could trigger medical inflation.

Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations Malaysia (FPMPAM) president Dr Shanmuganathan TV Ganeson said the enforcement would impact livelihoods and restrict patient access to affordable care.

He said GPs nationwide have long practised a "bundled fee" model, in which charges for administrative tasks, consultations, nursing, medication and minor procedures are combined into one affordable sum for the entire visit.

With the new move, Shanmuganathan said GPs may no longer be able to pool the services under a single bill, and a typical clinic visit could now cost patients over RM100.

"The bundled model mirrors the Diagnostic Related Groups (DRG) pricing system, which helps contain costs and offers predictability for patients.

"For instance, treating a common condition like dengue fever might typically include: RM35 for consultation, RM20 for medicine and RM40 for blood tests, totalling RM95, with no separate charges for registration, nursing, disposables, utilities or compliance documentation.

"However, under the new itemised or

'unbundled' billing requirement, patients could now see charges such as RM5 for registration, RM10 for medicine, RM5 for disposables, RM5 for waste disposal and RM5 each for nursing and infectious disease notifications. This would raise the total bill to around RM110," he explained in a WhatsApp reply to *theSun*.

Shanmuganathan warned that the shift would not only drive up costs but also increase the administrative load for GPs, who have traditionally absorbed or waived minor fees to keep care affordable.

On Sunday, the Health Ministry clarified that there is no policy change or new directive requiring private medical clinics to provide itemised billing by default.

It said itemised bills are only mandatory upon a patient's request and must be issued at no extra charge to help patients understand the breakdown of service, treatment and medication costs.

"The right of patients to request an itemised bill is stipulated under the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services (Private Hospitals and Other Private Healthcare Facilities) Regulations 2006," the ministry said in a statement.

It emphasised that continued collaboration among stakeholders will enhance healthcare quality and safeguard patient rights, in line with Madani values, particularly "well-being," which promotes equal rights for both patients and private providers.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

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Kekang penyakit berjangkit di sempadan

500 kakitangan KKM sertai AKPS

Operasi Agensi Kawalan dan Perlindungan Sempadan Malaysia (AKPS), akan diperkukuhkan dengan penyerapan kira-kira 500 kakitangan dari Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) yang ditugaskan sebagai penguat kuasa bagi membanteras dan mengawal ancaman kesihatan berbahaya seperti penyakit berjangkit dan haiwan pembawa penyakit zoonotik di sempadan negara.

Oleh Latifah Arifin dan Ilah Hafiz Aziz → Nasional 3

Berita Harian M/s 3 Nasional 19/5/2025 (Isnin)

500 kakitangan KKM diserap ke AKPS kawal ancaman penyakit

424 petugas sudah disenarai laksana 3 bidang keutamaan di pintu masuk negara

Oleh Latifah Arifin dan Ilah Hafiz Aziz
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Kuala Lumpur: Agensi Kawalan dan Perlindungan Sempadan Malaysia (AKPS), jabatan tunggal mengawal selia sempadan yang dijangka beroperasi sepenuhnya bulan depan diperkukuhkan dengan penyerapan kira-kira 500 kakitangan dari Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM).

Kumpulan kakitangan KKM itu akan ditugaskan sebagai penguat kuasa AKPS bagi membanteras dan mengawal ancaman kesihatan berbahaya seperti penyebaran penyakit berjangkit dan haiwan pembawa penyakit zoonotik masuk ke dalam negara.

BH difahamkan, sejak beberapa bulan lalu, KKM sudah menyenaraikan sejumlah 424 pegawainya untuk diserapkan ke dalam agensi itu bagi melaksanakan tiga bidang keutamaan iaitu membabitkan pemeriksaan, kawalan dan penguatkuasaan di pintu masuk negara.

Sebelum ini, difahamkan aspek kesihatan di sempadan dikendalikan oleh KKM sendiri sebagai antara agensi yang berada di barisan hadapan di sempadan bersama kakitangan agensi lain seperti Jabatan Imigresen, Jabatan Kastam Diraja Malaysia, polis dan Jabatan Perkhidmatan Veterinar.

Media sebelum ini melaporkan, kerajaan sudah meluluskan 6,813 perjawatan untuk menyertai AKPS yang berfungsi sebagai agensi tunggal di sempadan, menyatukan kepakaran dan sumber dari pelbagai jabatan kerajaan untuk menyelaraskan operasi di 141 pintu masuk negara.

KKM berkata, selepas pegawai berkenaan menyertai AKPS, se-

Eksklusif

5,000 pegawai agensi penguat kuasa diserap ke AKPS

Keratan akhbar BH 10 Mac lalu.

berkuat kuasa.

"Selain itu, penguat kuasa berkenaan juga akan melaksanakan tindakan pengawalan membabitkan barangan seperti makanan, dadah, racun, kosmetik serta produk lain berkaitan dengan kesihatan yang dibawa masuk atau keluar dari Malaysia," katanya kepada BH.

Pemindahan ikut keperluan
Mengulas lanjut, KKM berkata, tarikh pemindahan kakitangan kementerian itu akan dilaksanakan berdasarkan keperluan semasa.

"Ia tidak akan memberi kesan kerana mereka menjalankan tugas sedia ada walaupun di bawah kawal selia agensi baharu.

"Namun begitu sekiranya terdapat keperluan perkhidmatan, KKM bersedia memohon perjawatan baharu daripada agensi pusat," katanya.

Ancaman kesihatan awam ada-

lah seperti penyebaran penyakit berjangkit, kemasukan ubat dan bahan kimia terlarang, penyeludupan haiwan pembawa penyakit zoonotik, makanan dan minuman tidak selamat dan kemasukan pendatang asing yang tidak mempunyai vaksinasi asas.

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Perjawatan keseluruhan AKPS pula adalah seramai 12,000 orang kakitangan apabila pengoperasian penuh pada tahun depan.

Setakat 1 Februari lalu, 22 pintu masuk diambil alih AKPS dengan Lapangan Terbang Antarabangsa Kuala Lumpur (KLIA), Lapangan Terbang Antarabangsa Pulau Pinang dan Lapangan Terbang Antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu sudah melalui fasa pertama pelaksanaan sistem itu dalam menambah baik operasi kawalan di pintu masuk negara.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 13
RUANGAN : VIEWS

The Star M/s 13 Views 19/5/2025 (Isnin)

Remember that Covid-19 is endemic

THERE has been a recent spike in Covid-19 cases in Singapore, with a recorded estimate of 14,200 cases from April 27 to May 3, according to the health authorities.

This has triggered some businesses to "reactivate contingency plans to deal with staff shortages and safeguard customer health".

"Periodic Covid-19 waves of infection are expected throughout the year," they added in news reports.

Currently, two variants of the main Covid-19 JN.1 variant, LF 7 and NB 1.8, are circulating in Singapore, accounting for more than two-thirds of locally sequenced cases. The JN.1 variant is the one used in formulating the

current Covid-19 vaccine, according to Singapore's Health Ministry.

Doctors are saying that the disease is mild for the most part, and cases are treated as an endemic disease, like the common flu.

Since Singapore and Malaysia are like Siamese twins, with a strong interaction between our peoples, our health authorities must be prepared in advance to meet this issue head on here.

The outbreak of these cases is said to be due to a weaker immunity as the follow up rate for booster vaccine jabs declines. Older people aged 60 and above, especially those with comorbidities and those in old folks homes, seem to be more susceptible to the disease.

Singaporean health authorities are saying that those with an increased risk of contracting Covid-19 should receive an additional dose of vaccine about one year after their last dose. The list includes healthcare workers and those closely allied to the care of the elderly. Others who feel the need for protection can also be vaccinated.

Malaysian pharmacies should ensure they have sufficient stock of Covid-19 self-test kits for public purchase and use.

The public should be advised to take personal hygiene measures, like frequent handwashing and covering one's nose and mouth when coughing and/or sneezing.

The old anti-Covid-19 regime should be brought into play, ie, minimising social interaction and avoiding unnecessary travel when not feeling well. Wearing masks should make a comeback in crowded areas or when displaying flu-like symptoms.

Being forewarned is being forearmed.

DR A. SOORIAN
Seremban