AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 12
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

2 kenamaan disahkan bebas jangkitan

Individu jalani ujian kerana ada kontak dengan kes ke-26

***Pekerja UDA Holdings Berhad menjalani** pemeriksaan suhu badan di Pejabat Uda Holding, semalam.*
(Foto Fathil Asri /BH)

Oleh Hazwan Faisal Mohamad, Latifah Arifin, Faris Fuad dan Noor Atiqah Sulaiman
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Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) mengesahkan dua orang kenamaan yang dikaitkan mempunyai kontak dengan kes ke-26 disyaki positif COVID-19 Malaysia, bebas daripada jangkitan.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata pihaknya sudah menerima keputusan penuh kedua-dua individu berprofil tinggi itu dari Hospital Sungai Buloh pada jam 3.30 petang semalam.

"Keputusan mendapati kedua-dua ujian adalah negatif COVID-19," katanya dalam satu kenyataan, semalam.

Dalam kenyataan terdahulu, beliau berkata, kes ke-26 yang dilaporkan pada 1 Mac lalu sedang dirawat dan dipantau di wad isolasi Hospital Sungai Buloh (HSB) dan dilaporkan stabil.

"Lima kontak rapat keluarga, seorang pembantu khas kepada kes ke-26 dan seorang kakitangan kesihatan swasta disahkan negatif COVID-19.

"Siasatan dan pengesanan kontak rapat masih dijalankan," katanya dalam satu kenyataan, semalam.

Sejak kelmarin, berita mengenai seorang bekas menteri dan timbalan menteri dipercayai kontak rapat dengan kes ke-26 positif COVID-19 tersebar luas di media sosial.

Mereka dikatakan berhubung langsung dengan orang lain termasuk petugas media, sehingga mencetuskan kemungkinan perlu melakukan saringan kesihatan.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, tiada kes baharu COVID-19 dilaporkan setakat ini, manakala jumlah kumulatif kes sehingga semalam kekal 29 kes iaitu 17 orang dalam kalangan kes pesakit bawah pemantauan (PUI), 10 orang dalam kalangan kontak rapat dan dua orang dalam kalangan rakyat Malaysia yang dibawa pulang menerusi Misi Bantuan Kemanusiaan.

"Daripada jumlah berkenaan, 15 orang adalah warganegara China, 11 orang warganegara Malaysia dan tiga orang masing-masing dari Amerika Syarikat, Jepun dan Itali.

"Dari 29 kes positif ini, sebanyak 22 kes sudah sembuh dan dibenarkan pulang manakala tujuh kes masih menerima rawatan di wad isolasi di beberapa hospital di Lembah Klang. Semua kes dalam keadaan stabil," katanya.

Beliau menasihatkan orang ramai tidak menularkan berita mengenai jangkitan COVID-19 yang tidak disahkan pihak kementerian bagi mengelak situasi panik dan salah faham dalam masyarakat.

"Pihak kementerian ingin menegaskan, siasatan terhadap kes positif COVID-19 dan pengesanan kontak dilakukan mengikut prosedur ditetapkan dalam Garis Panduan Pengurusan COVID-19.

"Kontak rapat adalah mereka yang berhubung rapat dengan kes yang disahkan positif COVID-19.

"Ini merangkumi mereka yang mempunyai kontak rapat dalam lingkungan satu meter dengan kes positif COVID-19 seperti anggota kesihatan yang merawat kes tanpa memakai peralatan perlindungan diri (PPE) disarankan atau mereka yang tinggal dalam satu rumah sama," katanya.

Sementara itu, UDA Holdings Berhad (UDA) mengesahkan seorang Ahli Lembaga Pengarahnya disahkan positif COVID-19 selepas menjalani ujian pengesanan baru-baru ini.

Tanpa mendedahkan identitinya, UDA Holdings dalam satu kenyataan semalam berkata, individu berkenaan dikuarantin di sebuah hospital kerajaan.

"UDA dalam usaha mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga bagi mengenal pasti individu yang berurusan secara dekat dengan individu terbabit. UDA turut bekerjasama dengan KKM berhubung perkara ini.

"Pada masa sama, pihak pengurusan UDA komited menjalankan tindakan sewajarnya bagi mengatasi penularan kes ini khususnya dalam kalangan warga kerja UDA.

"Usaha ini diambil demi mengutamakan kesihatan dan keselamatan semua kakitangan.

"Langkah pencegahan turut diperkemaskan di UDA termasuk bahagian anak syarikat seperti AnCasa Hotel Kuala Lumpur (AHKL) bagi mengatasi penularan wabak ini," katanya.

Pihak pengurusan UDA menegaskan, tiada kes dilaporkan di hotel berkenaan dan perniagaan berjalan seperti biasa.

Katanya, AHKL mengambil langkah sewajarnya menggunakan garis panduan KKM untuk kerja membersihkan seluruh kawasan hotel.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : LOKAL

lokal

Pengerusi Uda positif Covid-19

Tiga pegawai kanan Medac dikuarantin 14 hari

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Kuala Lumpur

Pengerusi Uda Holdings Bhd (Uda) Datuk Hisham Hamdan dipercayai positif Covid-19 manakala tiga lagi pengurusan kanan Kementerian Pembangunan Usahawan dan Koperasi (Medac) dikuarantin selama 14 hari.

HISHAM

Dalam satu pekeliling dikeluarkan Ketua Setiausaha Medac, Datuk Wan Suraya Wan Mohd Radzi, Kementerian Kesihatan menasihatkan Wan Suraya dan dua lagi pegawai kanan kementerian itu untuk menjalani kuarantin selama 14 hari.

Untuk memastikan operasi harian berjalan lancar di Medac, kementerian melantik sementara Datin Dr Syahira Hamidon untuk menjaga keseluruhan kementerian dan sektor industri utama manakala Abkari Abdullah sebagai ketua sektor pembangunan manakala Ismail Mohamed Yusof sebagai ketua pengurusan.

"Bagaimanapun, pegawai yang dilantik perlu merujuk kepada penyelia masing-masing sebelum sebarang keputusan boleh dibuat terutama perkara berkaitan dengan kementerian," katanya seperti dilaporkan portal The Edge Market.

Sebelum ini, Uda dalam satu kenyataan akhbar mengesahkan seorang Ahli Lembaga Pengarah disahkan positif Covid-19 dan kini dikuarantin di salah sebuah hospital kerajaan.

Bagaimanapun kenyataan itu tidak memaklumkan siapa individu dimaksudkan tetapi tular di media sosial Hisham positif Covid-19.

Berdasarkan perkara itu, Uda dalam usaha mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga bagi mengenal pasti individu yang berurusan secara dekat dengan individu terbabit.

Sementara itu, portal Malaysiagazette melaporkan Hisham juga sebelum itu dilihat bersama-sama dengan pimpinan baharu kerajaan termasuk Perdana Menteri, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Selain itu, bekas Menteri Pembangunan Usahawan dan Koperasi, Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Yusof juga dikatakan duduk semeja dan berborak berjam-jam bersama Hisham semasa majlis perpisahan bekas menteri berkenaan pada Khamis lalu di sebuah hotel.

Turut bersama ketika majlis yang sama ialah timbalannya, Datuk Dr Hatta Ramli dan barisan pegawai kanan kementerian berkenaan.

Semalam, Khazanah Nasional Berhad mengesahkan salah seorang kakitangannya dijangkiti wabak Covid-19 dan ada kaitan kerana suspek pernah ke Shanghai pada pertengahan Januari lalu.

Kakitangan itu adalah kes-26, iaitu salah satu daripada empat kes baharu penghidap wabak berkenaan.

Saya sihat saja: Wong Chen

Kuala Lumpur: "Tidak ada isu, saya sihat." Itu reaksi diberikan Ahli Parlimen Subang, Wong Chen susulan tular di media sosial mengenai kononnya beliau dipanggil untuk menjalani pemeriksaan Covid-19.

Beliau berkata, hanya berada di rumah dan mengambil langkah pencegahan selepas berada di dalam majlis yang sama bersama dengan beberapa kenamaan termasuk menteri dan bekas menteri, tiga hari lalu.

Menurutnya, ujian yang dijalankan hanyalah membabitkan bekas menteri dan timbalan menteri yang kebetulannya menghadiri perjumpaan politik sebelum ini.

"Saya nasihatkan kepada semua supaya sentiasa menjaga kesihatan dan mengambil langkah pencegahan, termasuk anda semua juga (wartawan).

"Apa yang saya tulis (di Facebook) adalah mengenai tanggungjawab yang perlu diambil. Kalau kita dari luar, janganlah balik dan peluk anak-anak kita dulu," katanya kepada Harian Metro semalam.

Terdahulu, beliau memuat naik status di Facebook mengenai dirinya yang hanya berada di rumah susulan seorang kakitangan Khazanah Nasional Berhad (Khazanah) positif wabak berkenaan.

Status berkenaan menyebabkan ramai bimbang dengan penularan Covid-19 itu.

"Saya nasihatkan kepada semua supaya sentiasa jaga kesihatan"
Wong

KAKITANGAN Uda memakai topeng muka di Pejabat Uda Holding, semalam.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : LOKAL

KONTRAKTOR Uda membawa alat untuk penyahkuman selepas Hisham disahkan positif Covid-19.

KKM siasat 2 orang kenamaan

Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) sedang menyiasat dua orang kenamaan yang dikatakan dijangkiti koronavirus baharu (Covid-19) yang dikaitkan dengan kes ke-26 di negara ini.

Ketua Pengarahnya Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, individu yang menjadi kes ke-26 dirawat di wad isolasi Hospital Sungai Buloh dan dilaporkan stabil.

Menurutnya, lima kontak rapat yang terdiri daripada ahli keluarga, pembantu khas dan kakitangan kesihatan swasta juga sudah disahkan negatif Covid-19 hasil ujian saringan namun pengesahan kontak rapat masih terus dijalankan.

"Sehingga hari ini (semalam), KKM mengesahkan tiada kes baru Covid-19 dikesan dan jumlah masih kekal 29 kes iaitu 17 orang dalam kalangan pesakit di bawah pemantauan, kontak rapat (10) dan dua rakyat Malaysia yang dibawa pulang dari Misi Bantuan Kemanusiaan.

DR Noor Hisham

"Dalam 29 kes yang dilaporkan, 22 daripadanya sudah disahkan sembuh dan dibenarkan keluar hospital. Tujuh lagi masih menerima rawatan di wad isolasi di beberapa hospital di Lembah Klang dan dilaporkan stabil," katanya.

Menurutnya, dalam gelombang pertama, kebanyakan kes Covid-19 adalah kes import dari China dan hanya dua kes transmisi tempatan.

Beliau berkata, 221 orang dikenal pasti mempunyai kontak rapat dengan tujuh kes yang dirawat di hospital dengan dua daripadanya disahkan positif manakala 74 kes lagi negatif selain 82 kes menunggu keputusan makmal serta 63 proses pengambilan sampel.

"Bagi mengetahui perkembangan lanjut, orang ramai dinasihatkan agar melayari laman web KKM dan boleh menghubungi infoline Pusat Kesiapsiagaan dan Respons Krisis di talian 03-88810200 atau emel cprc@moh.gov.my," katanya.

Bekas menteri negatif virus

Kuala Lumpur: Bekas menteri yang dikaitkan dengan individu disahkan positif Covid-19 mengesahkan dirinya negatif jangkitan selepas melakukan ujian dan pengesanan virus itu.

Bekas menteri daripada Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) itu berkata, beliau menjalani kuarantin di rumah bagi mematuhi prosedur operasi standard pengurusan Covid-19 Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM).

"Sudah jalani ujian pengesanan, ujian negatif, tetapi menjalani kuarantin sendiri di rumah.

"Saya sihat, Alhamdulillah," kata wakil rakyat itu.

Tular di media sosial sejak kelmarin mengenai bekas menteri dan timbalan menteri dipercayai kontak rapat dengan kes ke-26 positif Covid-19 dan berhubung langsung dengan orang lain termasuk petugas media, sehingga mencetuskan kekhuatiran. - Bernama

Bangunan Mercu UEM dikosongkan

Kuala Lumpur: Bangunan Mercu UEM yang menempatkan pejabat Khazanah Nasional Berhad (Khazanah) di KL Sentral di sini dikosongkan bagi memberi ruang kepada kerja pembersihan kuman di bangunan itu selama dua hari, bermula kelmarin.

Jurucakap UEM berkata, ia adalah prosedur biasa selepas mengambil kira laporan kakitangan Khazanah disahkan positif Covid-19.

"Kami membuat tiga pusingan kerja pembersihan di bangunan ini bermula jam 4 petang kelmarin hingga lewat petang semalam.

"Dalam hal ini, kerja yang dibuat secara teliti itu dilihat sebagai langkah pencegahan awal selepas mendapat laporan kakitangan Khazanah positif wabak itu.

"Semua kakitangan sudah dimaklumkan supaya bekerja dari rumah hari ini namun esok mereka perlu kembali ke tempat kerja dan bertugas seperti biasa," katanya.

Sementara itu, tinjauan di bangunan berkenaan mendapati ia sudah dikosongkan susulan laporan kakitangan mereka yang disahkan positif Covid-19.

Pengawal keselamatan memaklumkan hanya beberapa pengawal ditempatkan sekitar lobi dan pekarangan bangunan itu bagi memantau keadaan semasa.

"Yang saya tahu bangunan ini sudah kosong dan pelawat pun tidak dibenarkan masuk ke bangunan ini," katanya.

PEKERJA Uda membuat pemeriksaan suhu badan selepas seorang ahli lembaga pengarahnya disahkan positif Covid-19.

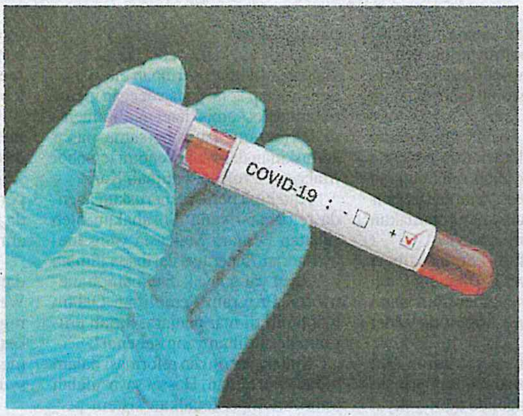
[illegible] Mercu UEM [illegible] salah [illegible] positif Covid-19

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 12
RUANGAN : ANCAMAN COVID-19

Bekas menteri, timbalan negatif Covid-19

Hasil ujian makmal dilakukan di Hospital Sungai Buloh

Oleh TUAN BUQHAIRAH TUAN MUHAMAD ADNAN



PUTRAJAYA

Bekas menteri dan timbalannya yang sebelum ini dikhuatiri dijangkiti wabak koronavirus (Covid-19) disahkan negatif.

Perkara itu disahkan oleh Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan (KKM), Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah menerusi ciapan KKM malam tadi.

DR NOOR HISHAM

Menurutnya, hasil ujian makmal di Hospital Sungai Buloh mendapati kedua-duanya adalah negatif jangkitan wabak itu.

"Susulan dua individu kenamaan yang dikaitkan dengan pesakit kes ke-26, hasil ujian makmal adalah negatif," katanya.

Terdahulu, KKM melakukan siasatan terhadap kedua-dua individu tersebut selepas dikaitkan dengan seorang ahli Lembaga Pengarah UDA Holdings yang positif jangkitan wabak berkenaan pada Sabtu lalu.

"KKM ingin merujuk kepada maklumat yang ditularkan di media sosial mengenai dua orang kenamaan yang dikatakan disyaki dijangkiti Covid-19 dan dikaitkan dengan kes ke-26," katanya.

Katanya, lima kontak rapat kepada individu itu turut disaring dan disahkan negatif.

"Antara kontak tersebut ialah keluarga, seorang pembantu khasnya dan seorang kakitangan kesihatan swasta," katanya.

Beliau berkata, KKM terus menjalankan siasatan dan pengesanan kontak rapat.

"KKM ingin menegaskan bahawa siasatan ke atas kes positif Covid-19 serta pengesanan kontak dilakukan mengikut prosedur yang ditetapkan dalam Garis Panduan Pengurusan wabak berkenaan," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, orang ramai diingatkan agar tidak menularkan berita mengenai kes jangkitan Covid-19 yang tidak disahkan oleh KKM.

Menurutnya, tiada kes baharu dilaporkan setakat ini.

"Jumlah kumulatif kes Covid-19 sehingga hari ini (semalam) kekal 29 kes iaitu 17 orang dalam kalangan kes Patient Under Investigation (PUI), 10 individu dalam kalangan kontak rapat dan dua dalam kalangan rakyat Malaysia yang dibawa pulang dengan Misi Bantuan Kemanusiaan.

"Daripada jumlah tersebut, seramai 15 orang adalah warganegara China, 11 orang warganegara Malaysia dan tiga orang masing-masing dari Amerika Syarikat, Jepun dan Itali," katanya.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 8
RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

OUTBREAK

TWO VIPs TEST NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19

They were seen at an event with a man who tested positive for the virus

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An UDA Holdings Bhd employee undergoing temperature screening in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIX BY FATHIL ASRI

THE Health Ministry has taken appropriate action regarding two prominent personalities who came in close contact with a Covid-19 patient.

Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the ministry was looking into claims that two VIPs had been in close proximity with Malaysia's 26th Covid-19 case.

"The ministry refers to the claim going viral on social media regarding two high-profile individuals suspected of contracting Covid-19 in relation to Case 26.

"The ministry is investigating and appropriate measures will be taken," he said yesterday.

He said the ministry conducted tests on Case 26's family members, personal assistant and a private healthcare employee who were in close contact with him.

Case 26 is a Malaysian man, 52, who travelled to Shanghai, China, in mid-January. The man is a Khazanah Nasional Bhd employee and a member of the UDA Holdings Bhd board.

Two portals had published reports about the man being seen with two VIPs at a function at a hotel here on Thursday amid the week-long political impasse.

"Case 26, who was reported on March 1, is receiving treatment in the isolation ward of Sungai Buloh Hospital and is in stable condition. Five close family members, one personal assistant to Case 26 and one private healthcare personnel have tested negative for Covid-19. Investigation and contact tracing are ongoing," Dr Noor Hisham said.

Later, he confirmed that both of the high-profile individuals tested negative for Covid-19.

He assured the people that the ministry was doing the needful and cautioned the public against taking viral posts at face value.

"Most news circulating online are not verified."

He reminded the public not to spread unverified news to prevent panic.

He said an infected person posed the most risk to his or her family members and those in close continuous contact.

Asked if those present at Thursday's event should be quarantined, he said it was not needed.

"It is not necessary if one has not been exposed to positive patients. One needs to be in close continuous contact (with a positive patient)," he said, refusing to comment further.

Dr Noor Hisham said 22 out of 29 Covid-19 patients had recovered and were discharged.

"Seven cases are still receiving treatment at isolation wards at several hospitals in the Klang Valley. All remaining cases are reported to be in stable condition.

"The ministry would like to reaffirm that investigations into Covid-19 positive cases and contact tracing were carried out in line with procedures laid out in the country's Covid-19 management guideline."

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : NATION

Cabinet discussions to proceed no matter what

By CLARISSA CHUNG
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PETALING JAYA: With or without a Covid-19 scare, the immediate plans of the new coalition government forge ahead, say political analysts.

Discussions on the composition of the Cabinet, they add, cannot be delayed.

Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian from the School of Social Sciences at Universiti Sains Malaysia said appointing the new Cabinet members would be the top priority.

"They (the new government) would have already started negotiating Cabinet seats and portfolios. If this is delayed further, the prime minister would be on his own.

"Because it is a new government, it needs a Cabinet and deputy ministers to start on the work," he said.

It is improbable, he added, that the formation of the Cabinet could stall over one or two persons who were exposed to a Covid-19 patient.

"If one or two politicians need to be quarantined, they can be sworn in later if they are indeed appointed.

"Right now, the majority of the politicians do not seem to be affected yet, so they will proceed," he said.

Assoc Prof Dr Muhammad Takiyuddin Ismail of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said any delay in the formation of the Cabinet would create a negative perception towards the new government.

"The most important thing for them right now is to expedite the appointment of ministers. It is of utmost importance to give people the perception that the government is on the right track.

"For the sake of establishing that the new government is in power, they have to expedite the Cabinet formation.

"There cannot be a delay," he said.

However, he added that it depended on the chain of events and how many people would be affected by the exposure to the Covid-19 patient.

The Health Ministry yesterday said it was acting on information on social media that two prominent personalities were said to have been in close contact recently with a person identified as the country's 26th Covid-19 patient.

The duo are not named in the ministry's press release but it is widely known that they are former entrepreneur development and cooperatives minister Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Md Yusof and his former deputy Datuk Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli.

The two politicians were believed to have separately been in several meetings that took place over the political turmoil last week.

Some media personnel covering the burst of political activity were also instructed to go for Covid-19 testing.

According to the Health Ministry, those who have come in close contact with Covid-19 patients and have symptoms are referred to hospitals to be tested and isolated for two weeks.

Those without symptoms will have samples taken for testing and they must remain at home for surveillance. Thirteen days later, additional samples are taken to reconfirm that their tests are negative.

Ex-minister and deputy in the clear

Duo in political circles who had contact with Case No. 26 test negative

By RAHIMY RAHIM
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Close call: Redzuan (left) and Hatta can breathe easy after testing negative for Covid-19.

PETALING JAYA: For a day or two, it looked like Covid-19 had entered the country's political equation. A former minister and his deputy were recently seen in close contact with a corporate executive identified as the 26th person in Malaysia infected with the disease.

However, the Health Ministry said both men tested negative.

Given the flurry of political meetings over the past week, there was concern whether the encounter between the two politicians and Case No. 26 would worsen the Covid-19 situation here.

Former entrepreneur development and cooperatives minister Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Md Yusof and his former deputy at the ministry, Datuk Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli, went for testing at Hospital Sungai Buloh at about 1.30pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, UDA Holdings Bhd (UDA), a property company under Redzuan's ministry, said one of its board members had been tested positive for Covid-19 and was being quarantined in a government hospital.

It is learnt that the board member, who is also part of the Khazanah Nasional Bhd management, was at a function attended by Redzuan and Hatta.

On Sunday, a news portal reported that a Covid-19 patient was believed to have been in close contact with the two leaders at an event held on Feb 27 to show appreciation for them as they were leaving the ministry following the dissolution of the Pakatan Harapan Cabinet.

"Based on the matter above, UDA is in the midst of taking preventative measures by identifying other individuals who have been in close contact with the individual.

"UDA will cooperate with the Health Ministry from time to time," said UDA in a statement.

The company added that preventive measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus had been tightened including at subsidiary AnCasa Hotel Kuala Lumpur, which is the venue of the Feb 27 event according to news reports.

"The UDA management stresses that so far there are no cases involving any of its in-house guests and the business is operating as usual.

"The hotel's management has also taken the necessary measures by adopting the standard operating procedures issued by the Health Ministry to sanitise the whole area of the hotel.

"UDA and the hotel management will continue to take proactive measures from time to time," said the company.

When contacted, Hatta confirmed that he had voluntarily gone to the hospital to get tested after he found out that the UDA board member had tested positive for Covid-19.

"He is now under self-quarantine at home in Ampang," said the aide, who declined to be named.

Redzuan also confirmed that he went for testing at the same hospital.

"I am feeling normal. Doctor was very happy," he said.

On Sunday, Khazanah said one of its employees had been diagnosed with Covid-19.

Case No. 26 is a 52-year-old Malaysian who travelled to Shanghai in mid-January. He started having fever and sore throat on Feb 27 and sought outpatient treatment at a private hospital on the same day.

He tested positive on Feb 29 and was admitted to the isolation ward at Hospital Sungai Buloh.

Subang MP Wong Chen yesterday said that he would be in self-quarantine for two days following reports that the two former ministry heads were in close contact with the Covid-19 patient.

"I am perfectly fine healthwise this morning," he tweeted.

Case No. 26 under scrutiny
See page 9

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 9
RUANGAN : NATION

Case No. 26 under scrutiny

Ministry monitoring contacts to determine source of infection

PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry is looking into the cases of two politicians who were exposed to a Covid-19 patient last week.

The former minister and his former deputy were said to be in close contact with an UDA Holdings Bhd board member, who is the country's 26th Covid-19 patient.

"The Health Ministry refers to the information going viral on social media regarding two high-profile individuals allegedly suspected with Covid-19 infection relating to Case No. 26.

"The Ministry is currently investigating and appropriate measures will be undertaken," said Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah in a press statement yesterday.

Case No. 26, he added, was reported on March 1, and the patient is undergoing treatment and monitoring in Hospital Sungai Buloh.

The patient is reported to be in a stable condition.

"Five close family members, one personal assistant to Case 26, and one private healthcare personnel had tested negative for Covid-19.

"The investigation and contact tracing activities are still ongoing," he said.

He said as of Monday, the cumulative number of Covid-19 cases in the country remains at 29.

"From the 29 confirmed cases, 22 have fully recovered and have been discharged, while seven are receiving treatment at several hospitals in the Klang Valley," he said, adding that they were all in stable condition.

A total of 221 people, Dr Noor Hisham added, were known to have had close contact with the seven Covid-19 cases still receiving treatment in Malaysian hospitals.

From these 221 close contacts, two were confirmed to be positive cases (which are Cases No. 27 and No. 29) while 74 were confirmed as negative.

"Another 82 cases are still pending lab results, while another 63 cases are currently in the process of sample collection," he added.

He urged the public not to circulate information about the Covid-19 cases that have not been authenticated by the ministry.

Members of the public, he said, should maintain good hygiene by frequent washing of hands with soap or by using hand sanitiser.

According to the ministry, only individuals categorised as close contacts of confirmed Covid-19 cases will be screened and their samples taken for testing.

These close contacts are defined as individuals with a history of being physically close to a confirmed Covid-19 case, meaning being within a one-metre radius of that person.

Individuals with a history of contact with suspected Covid-19 cases (that is, cases that have not been confirmed through lab tests), are not categorised as close contacts and samples will not be taken from them.

Those who wish to have further information on Covid-19, can contact the national Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre via its hotline 03-888 10200, 03-888 10600 or 03-888 10700, or email them at *cprc@moh.gov.my.*

Istana staff ordered to get tested

By FATIMAH ZAINAL
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PETALING JAYA: All Istana Negara officers and staff members have been instructed to undergo tests for Covid-19 following reports that several MPs had been exposed to a confirmed Covid-19 patient, according to a palace official who posted the news on his social media account.

Istana Negara ceremonial officer Sophian Ab Rahman posted the information on his personal Twitter account yesterday.

"Following news that there is a possibility that there were MPs who had been in close contact with a Covid-19 patient, all officers and staff members of Istana Negara have been instructed to undergo compulsory tests.

"May Allah protect our King and all of us from this outbreak," he wrote under the Twitter handle @sophianrahman77 at press time.

He also uploaded a photo of himself undergoing the medical test at an undisclosed health facility.

MPs had been in and out of Istana Negara from Feb 23 until Sunday during a political upheaval which unseated the Pakatan Harapan Federal Government.

A new alliance, Perikatan Nasional, came to power under the leadership of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin who was sworn in as the eighth Prime Minister on Sunday.

Shortly after, there were reports that a former minister and a former deputy minister from Pakatan had been in close contact with a Khazanah Nasional Bhd employee who had tested positive for Covid-19.

According to reports, the close contact allegedly took place on Feb 27 during an appreciation event.

The former minister and former deputy minister were also seen mingling with other MPs during a series of political meetings that took place over the past week.

Safety measures: Sophian undergoing the test for Covid-19. — Credit to his Twitter account *@sophianrahman77*

'Rethink healthcare for migrant workers'

By LOH FOON FONG
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KUALA LUMPUR: The government needs to rethink its healthcare policies towards undocumented migrant workers as the current policy drives them underground and made contact tracing and quarantine difficult for management of outbreaks, said epidemiologist Dr Chan Chee Khoon.

He said Malaysia could not ignore its large pool of undocumented migrant workers as long as contact tracing (those who have come in close contact with those who have been tested positive with Covid-19) and quarantine remained as tools for managing the outbreak.

"The Health Ministry and Home Ministry need to rethink their policies towards undocumented migrant workers, which currently drive them underground rather than encourage them to come forth to seek treatment when afflicted with infectious and other ailments.

"It would be extremely difficult to carry out contact tracing when undocumented migrant workers have strong incentives to avoid contact with government agencies," he said.

Dr Chan was asked whether Malaysia should change its strategy of handling Covid-19 following reports saying that the Covid-19 was different from the SARS and has more similarities with H1N1 and spread as quickly as influenza but not as deadly as SARS.

On Saturday, Universiti Malaya academician Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Lam Sai Kit said the government could refer to the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan it developed in 2006 should the Covid-19 outbreak turn pandemic.

But Dr Chan said that when countries moved towards Red Alert (out-of-control epidemic spread), contact tracing and quarantine may be less useful.

"At that point, the emphasis may shift to include tracing recovered cases, and even infected individuals who shrugged it off with mild symptoms or even without symptoms, and who never came to attention.

"An antibody test to identify those who have been infected and subsequently recovered would be very useful to allow for collection of plasma from them.

"China has been attempting to use the plasma to treat the severely ill cases," he said.

Based on China's statistics, there would be four times more cases of recovered persons than of severely ill persons, which is a potential huge pool of plasma to harvest, he said.

"So, the challenge is keeping track of these cases and having the capacity to produce safe and efficacious plasma in the required volumes," said Dr Chan.

He said that this would be useful while awaiting vaccines and more effective treatment modalities to be introduced, on top of stepped-up measures at social distancing.

Asked if the same would be done if the outbreak reached pandemic level (out-of-control community spread in many countries), Dr Chan said countries would have to deploy multiple measures or reallocate resources to include social distancing and mandatory self-quarantines when targeted contact tracing and institutional quarantines no longer suffice.

Individual measures to reduce infection risk such as frequent, proper handwashing, informed risk avoidance behaviours and institutional responses which are not unduly alarmist should be undertaken.

Think tank: New Health Minister needed urgently

PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin must quickly identify and appoint a Health Minister as the Covid-19 outbreak appears to be on the cusp of a pandemic, says a think tank.

Galen Centre for Health and Social Policy chief executive Azrul Mohd Khalib said the new government must place the response and management to Covid-19 at the highest priority to protect the health and safety of all Malaysians.

"The appointment will fill a critical gap in the leadership of the country's public health system, particularly for the Covid-19 multiministerial taskforce.

"He or she will need to ensure that our critical frontline healthcare professionals and supporting services continue to be provided with adequate logistics, manpower and funding.

"This will ensure that our health services are able to maintain its efforts to contain the disease and treat those infected," he said in a statement.

Azrul said a strong and competent leadership makes a difference in managing the Covid-19 outbreak.

He also credited the Health Ministry's personnel for their exemplary response in managing Covid-19 cases in the country.

However, he pointed out that the role of the Health Minister was now "more essential than ever" based on World Health Organisation's latest risk assessment on Covid-19, in terms of spread and impact.

"We appear to be on the precipice of a pandemic, if we're not already in one. The role of the Health Minister is essential to communicate developments and progress to the public on the ongoing efforts by the government to curtail the health threat," he said.

Bukit Aman ready to help out in virus fight

KUALA LUMPUR: Bukit Aman is ready to assist the Health Ministry in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak, says Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Bador.

The Inspector-General of Police said their personnel had been assigned to ensure the safety of quarantine centres, as well as tracking down infected patients.

"We are always ready to assist the ministry," he said at a press conference yesterday.

While duty comes first, the IGP said health and safety of their personnel were a priority.

"We will follow the advice and guidelines by the health authorities. Our frontliners have always maintain good hygiene and they are also subjected to regular health screenings," he added.

Abdul Hamid said he had also requested for flu jabs for police personnel.

On his health, the country's top cop said he was fine and had no sleepless nights.

"I hope all frontliners will remain healthy and vigilant," he added.

AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NEWS WITHOUT BORDERS

An employee at the UDA office getting her temperature checked yesterday.

Khazanah senior exec infected with Covid-19

BY **CINDI LOO**
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PETALING JAYA: Another Covid-19 case has been recorded in Malaysia, after a Khazanah senior executive was confirmed infected with the virus on Sunday.

The Health Ministry said it initiated an investigation immediately following claims of an ex-minister and his deputy coming into close contact with the infected individual.

Patient 26 is a senior leader at both Khazanah Nasional Bhd and UDA Holdings Bhd. Two politicians, one from Perikatan Nasional and one from Pakatan Harapan, were seen with him at an event on Feb 27.

"The patient is in isolation at the Sungai Buloh Hospital and is in stable condition, and further contact tracing is ongoing," said Health Director-General Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah in a statement yesterday.

There were no new positive cases as of yesterday afternoon. In total, seven people are being treated for the virus, said Noor Hisham.

He advised the public not to spread unverified news about Covid-19 to avoid creating panic and misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, UDA Holdings Berhad confirmed that one of its board members was infected with the virus.

"UDA is taking precautionary measures to identify individuals who worked closely with the individual. UDA is also working with the Health Ministry on the matter," it said in a statement yesterday.

Preventive measures to curb the spread of the virus has also been taken at the UDA office and offices of its subsidiaries, including the hotel where "patient 26" and the two politicians met.

"The management of UDA said that no case was reported at the hotel involving in-house guests, and business is running as usual.

"The hotel has also taken appropriate steps, following guidelines from the Health Ministry on sanitising the entire area."