

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN

MUKA SURAT : 12

RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Malaysia sekat sementara pelawat Korea Selatan

Warga asing pernah ke Daegu, Cheongdo turut dihalang masuk

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Kuala Lumpur; Malaysia menyekat sementara kemasukan semua pelawat dari Korea Selatan bagi mengekang penularan wabak COVID-19, berkuat kuasa serta-merta.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata sekatan sementara turut membabitkan warga asing yang pernah berada di bandar Daegu dan daerah Cheongdo dalam tempoh 14 hari sebelum ketibaan ke negara ini, meliputi pelawat yang transit melalui Malaysia.

"Warga Malaysia, penduduk tetap dan pemegang pas sama ada lawatan sosial atau pelajar yang pernah berada di bandar Daegu dan daerah Cheongdo dalam tempoh 14 hari sebelum tiba di negara ibu juga perlu menjalani saringan kesihatan.

"Bagi meningkatkan kawalan di pintu masuk antarabangsa negara, Jabatan Imigresen (Imigresen) akan turut menyediakan kaunter khas untuk pelawat dari Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran," katanya dalam satu kenyataan.



Bagi tingkat kawalan di pintu masuk antarabangsa negara Imigresen turut menyediakan kaunter khas untuk pelawat dari Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran.

*Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah,
Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan*



Orang ramai beratur untuk membeli topeng muka di sebuah kedai di Seoul. Korea Selatan catat lebih 2,000 kes COVID-19, angka terbesar dicatat di luar China.
(Foto AFP)

taan, di sini semalam.

Pada masa sama, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, buat masa ini rakyat Malaysia dinasihatkan supaya menangguhkan perjalanan ke wilayah atau bandar yang diisytiharkan sebagai kawasan wabak COVID-19 iaitu di China, Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran.

Sehingga semalam, Korea Selatan melaporkan 334 kes baharu COVID-19, menjadikan jumlahnya kini mencecah 1,593 dengan 307 kes dilaporkan di bandar Daegu.

Sementara itu, beliau berkata, bagi COVID-19 di Malaysia, terdapat dua kes baharu dilaporkan hari ini membabitkan seorang wanita warga Jepun berusia 41 tahun yang bekerja di negara ini dan lelaki warga Itali berusia 54

tahun yang menetap di sini.

Katanya, dengan penambahan dua kes terbaru ini, jumlah kumulatif kes COVID-19 sehingga semalam ialah 25 kes iaitu 15 dalam kalangan kes yang disikat (PUT), lapan dalam kalangan kontak rapat dan baki dua rakyat Malaysia yang dibawa pulang dengan Misi Bantuan Kemanusiaan, baru-baru ini.

"Kes ke-24 membabitkan wanita berusia 41 tahun itu mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke Jepun pada Januari dan juga ke Indonesia pada awal Februari lalu.

"Pesakit kemudian mempunyai gejala demam dan disahkan positif, semalam dan kini sedang dirawat di wad isolasi Hospital Kuala Lumpur.

"Pesakit lelaki pula mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke Itali atas urusan kerja pada 15 hingga 21 Februari lalu dan mengalami gejala demam, batuk, sakit sendi dan sakit badan keesokan harinya sebelum disahkan positif COVID-19, hari ini dan kini sedang dirawat di Hospital Sungai Buloh," katanya.

Beliau berkata, daripada 25 kes direkodkan setakat ini, 15 membabitkan warga China, tujuh (Malaysia) dan tiga masing-masing warga Amerika Syarikat, Jepun serta Itali.

Katanya, sebanyak 22 kes sembuh dan dibenarkan keluar daripada hospital menjadikan kes yang masih menerima rawatan di wad pada ketika ini tiga orang.

Kementerian terima 2.5 juta dos kawal polio

Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) menerima 2.5 juta dos vaksin monovalent oral polio type 2 (mOPV2) daripada Perubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) Simpanan Vaksin (Vaccines Stockpile), Tabung Kecemasan Kanak-kanak Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu (UNICEF).

Ketua Pengarah KKM, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata vaksin berkenaan akan diberikan kepada lebih satu juta kanak-kanak bawah usia 13 tahun di Sabah untuk kawalan wabak polio.

Katanya, pada masa ini Malaysia masih kekal mencatatkan tiga kes disahkan polio membabitkan masing-masing bayi berusia

tiga bulan dari daerah Tuaran, kanak-kanak berusia lapan tahun di Sandakan dan kanak-kanak berusia 11 tahun di Kinabatangan.

Beliau berkata, seorang kanak-kanak berusia tiga tahun yang sihat tiada bergejala dari daerah Semporna juga dikesan positif virus polio melalui persampelan yang disasarkan terhadap kanak-kanak sihat (*targeted healthy children sampling*).

"Lima sampel persekitaran air lumbuhan juga dikesan positif virus poliodari daerah Kota Kinabalu dan Semporna," katanya dalam satu kenyataan, di sini semalam.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, sebagaimana langkah kawalan, kerajaan

mengeluarkan peruntukan tambahan untuk menjalankan kampen imunisasi bivalent Oral Polio Vaccine (bOPV) kepada kanak-kanak di seluruh Sabah sejak 27 Disember tahun lalu.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, bagi menjayakan kampen berkenaan Jabatan Kesihatan Sabah mendapat kerjasama daripada Kerajaan Sabah dan agensi kerajaan peringkat negeri yang lain terdiri daripada universiti, pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO) dan sukarelawan.

Katanya, kampen imunisasi itu dilaksanakan melalui pasukan bergerak yang diadakan di klinik kerajaan, balai raya, pusat komuniti, pusat perniagaan dan premis

keagamaan.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, Kementerian Kesihatan juga bekerjasama dengan WHO dan UNICEF dalam mengawal wabak polio itu dan akan diteruskan sehingga wabak itu selesai.

Katanya, vaksin mOPV2 yang dibekalkan UNICEF itu adalah vaksin tambahan dan perlu diambil dengan vaksin bOPV yang disediakan oleh kerajaan sebagai memastikan perlindungan virus polio itu lengkap.

Beliau kongsikan bahawa vaksin ini akan memberi perlindungan kepada kanak-kanak serta menghalang penularan virus polio.

"Semua kanak-kanak berusia bawah 13 tahun akan diberikan

dua jenis vaksin itu tanpa mengira status imunisasi.

"Kejayaan kampen ini bergantung kepada liputan imunisasi yang menyeluruh iaitu sekurang-kurangnya 95 peratus kanak-kanak di bawah 13 tahun diberi imunisasi OPV."

"Kementerian Kesihatan ingin memaklumkan bahawa vaksin OPV adalah selamat dan perlu diberikan beberapa kali kepada kanak-kanak bagi kesan yang optimum."

"Kami menggesa ibu bapa, penjaga pusat asuhan, tadika dan sekolah untuk memastikan kanak-kanak menerima imunisasi OPV yang diberikan semasa kampen diadakan," katanya.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 24
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Semakin ramai remaja bawah 18 tahun merokok: JKN Pahang

Kuantan: Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri (JKN) Pahang mendapati semakin ramai remaja di bawah 18 tahun merokok.

Pengaruhnya, Datuk Dr Bahari Muda, berkata ini dapat dilihat apabila 152 notis kesalahan merokok di premis makan dikeluarkan kepada remaja di negeri ini dalam tempoh dua bulan ini.

Katanya, pihaknya memandang serius pertambahan jumlah remaja merokok kerana bermula dengan merokok mereka akan terdedah dengan penagihan dah.

"Walaupun larangan menjual rokok kepada remaja bawah umur sudah lama dikuatkuasaikan, namun ia tetap dilakukan pelkedai secara sembunyi.

"Faktor berkenaan mengunitkan pertambahan jumlah remaja sekolah menengah terbabit dengan aktiviti menghisap rokok," katanya pada program 'Walkabout Bebas Asap Rokok di Tempat Makan' di Jalan Tun Ismail, di sini, kelmarin.

Beliau berkata, ibu bapa perlu memainkan peranan bagi memastikan anak mereka tidak merokok, sentiasa pantau aktiviti mereka, terutama di rumah dan berbincang secara baik.

Sementara itu, Dr Bahari berkata, pihaknya melakukan pemeriksaan terhadap 12,458 premis makanan seluruh negeri dan mengeluarkan 733 notis kesalahan kepada perokok kerana melanggar penguatkuasaan larangan merokok yang dikuat kuasa mulai 1 Januari lalu.

Katanya, 75 notis amaran dilakuarkan pemilik premis seluruh negeri membabitkan 57 notis gagal meletakkan tanda larangan merokok dan 18 notis gagal memastikan pelanggan tidak merokok dalam premis mereka.

Menurutnya, sepanjang operasi itu 959 pelbagai kesalahan dikesan dilakukan pemilik premis membabitkan kebersihan, kad kesihatan, penyediaan makanan dan kawasan persekitaran.

"Daerah ini mencatat jumlah tertinggi notis kesalahan merokok dikeluarkan, iaitu 1,775, diikuti Bera (1,753), Rompin (1,473), Bentong (1,349), Cameron Highlands (1,309), Temerloh (1,010), Pekan (842), Maran (840), Raub (798), Lipis (660) dan Jerantut (649).

"Tinjauan secara ulangan selama dua bulan di premis mendapat jumlah kesedaran masyarakat terhadap larangan merokok di premis semakin bertambah.

"Aktiviti penguatkuasaan terus dilakukan secara berterusan bagi memastikan semua pihak, iaitu perokok dan pemilik premis mematuhi peraturan," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO

MUKA SURAT : 8A

RUANGAN : LOKAL



Putrajaya

Malaysia menyekat sementara kemasukan semua pelawat dari Korea Selatan termasuk warganegara asing yang pernah berada di bandar Daegu dan daerah Cheongdo dalam tempoh 14 hari sebelum ketibaan di negara ini.

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) dalam satu kenyataan semalam, memaklumkan sekatan itu turut meliputi pelawat yang melakukan transit melalui Malaysia.

Memurut kenyataan itu, warganegara Malaysia, penduduk tetap dan pemegang pas (pas lawatan sozial jangka panjang dan pas pelajar) yang pernah berada di kedua-dua kawasan itu dalam tempoh 14 hari sebelum ketibaan ke Malaysia juga perlu menjalani saringan kesihatan oleh KKM. "Bagi meningkatkan kawalan di pintu masuk antarabangsa, Jabatan Imigresen turut menyediakan unit khas untuk pelawat Korea Selatan, Jepun, Iran," katanya.

berkuat kuasa itu diputuskan rat Jawatan Cluster Co-ama Pelbagai

**2 KES BAHARU DILAPOR**

TINGKAT KAWALAN

Malaysia sekat kemasukan pelawat dari dua daerah di Korea Selatan

PEKERJA syarikat penyediaan servis pembersihan menjalankan kerja pembasmian di kawasan tumpuan membilibelah di Seoul.

Agensi yang diselaraskan oleh Agensi Pengurusan Bencana Negara (Nadma).

Ia turut melibatkan KKM, Kementerian Dalam Negeri, Jabatan Imigresen, Kementerian Luar Negeri dan agensi lain yang berkaitan.

KKM berkata, pihak berkuasa negara ini akan membuat penilaian berterusan dalam usaha mengawal dan menghapuskan wabak Covid-19 di mana

langkah sekatan sementara itu akan dibatalkan sekiranya keadaan kembali pulih.

"Berdasarkan perkembangan terkini wabak itu, rakyat Malaysia dinasihatkan supaya menangguhkan perjalanan ke wilayah atau bandar yang diisyiti-harkan sebagai kawasan wabak Co-

vid-19 di China dan juga Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran.

"Orang awam yang bergejala dalam tempoh 14 hari selepas pulang dari mela-

uat China, Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran juga disaran

memaklumkan menge-nai seja-rah per-jalan-an

tersebut apabila mendapat rawatan," katanya.

Dalam pada itu, dua kes baharu Covid-19 dilaporkan semalam yang melibatkan wanita warga Jepun berusia 41 tahun yang bekerja di Malaysia serta lelaki war-ganegara Itali berumur 54 menjadikan jumlah kumulatif kes itu sehingga kini sebanyak 25 kes.

Bagi wanita Jepun yang juga kes ke-24, KKM berkata

Setakat ini hanya tiga kes positif Covid-19 masih menerima rawatan

beliau mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke Jepun pada Januari dan Indonesia awal bulan ini.

Menurut kenyataan berkenaan, pesakit tersebut mempunyai gejala demam dan sudah mendapat rawatan pada 17 Februari lalu sebelum dimasukkan ke sebuah hospital swasta pada 20 Februari di mana ujian pengesahan Covid-19 dijalankan dan wanita itu di-sahkan positif pada 27 Feb.

Pesakit kim sedang dirawat di wad isolasi Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL).

Bagi kes ke-25, KKM berkata lelaki itu yang berkawin dengan warganegara Malaysia dan menetap di negara ini mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke Itali atas urusan kerja pada 15 dan 21 Feb lalu sebelum mengalami gejala demam, batuk, sakit sendi dan sakit badan pada 22 Februari.

Lelaki itu kemudian mendapat rawatan sebagai pesakit luar bagi gejala yang dialaminya selama tiga hari berturut-turut bermula pada 23 Februari dan ujian saringan pengesahan yang dijalankan ke atasnya mengesahkan beliau positif Covid-19 pada 28 Februari.

Pesakit dimasukkan ke wad isolasi Hospital Sungai Buloh untuk rawatan dan pemantauan lanjut, menurut kenyataan itu.

KKM berkata, setakat ini hanya tiga kes positif Covid-19 masih menerima rawatan daripada keseluruhan 25 kes selepas 22 pesakit sembuh sepenuhnya dan dibemarkan pulang. - Bernama

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 24
RUANGAN : SINAR NEGERI

Klinik swasta disita

Beroperasi secara haram
sejak awal tahun

Oleh MOHD ISKANDAR OTHMAN

BAYAN LEPAS

Sebuah klinik swasta yang dipercayai beroperasi secara haram sejak awal tahun ini disita Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri (JKN) Pulau Pinang dalam serbuan petang kelmarin.

Operasi pada jam 2.30 petang itu dibuat hasil aduan awam selepas mendapati klinik berkenaan yang sudah ditutup sejak tahun lalu beroperasi semula tanpa berdaftar dengan pihak berwajib.

Difahamkan, klinik berkenaan diambil alih oleh pengurusan baharu tanpa menukar nama klinik lama dan beroperasi tanpa lesen sejak awal tahun ini.

JKN Pulau Pinang dalam satu keadaan berkata, serbuan itu dilakukan oleh sepasukan penguat kuasa dari Cawangan Kawalan Amalan Perubatan Swasta (CKAPS) dan Bahagian Pengawatkuasaan Farmasi.

Menurutnya, hasil pemeriksaan di-



Pegawai JKN Pulau Pinang (kiri) membawa keluar barang rampasan dari klinik yang didapati beroperasi tanpa lesen di Bayan Lepas kelmarin.

lakukan turut menjumpai beberapa ubat-ubatan yang tidak berdaftar dalam permis berkenaan.

“Klinik berkenaan yang dikendalikan oleh pegawai penguat kuasa berusia 30-an diarahkan tutup serta-merta kerana didapati melakukan kesalahan

mengikut Seksyen 4 (1) Akta Kemudahan dan Perkhidmatan Jagaan Kesihatan Swasta 1998 (Akta 586).

“Kita telah merampas beberapa dokumen dan ubat-ubatan yang tidak berdaftar yang ditemui di dalam klinik berkenaan,” kata kenyataan tersebut.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
 MUKA SURAT : 20
 RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Sekat pelawat Korea Selatan

Warganegara asing yang pernah berada di bandar Daegu dan daerah Cheongdo juga perlu dihalang masuk

Oleh TUAN BUQHAIRAH
 TUAN MUHAMAD ADNAN

PUTRAJAYA

Kerajaan mengenakan sekatan masuk sementara terhadap semua pelawat dari Korea Selatan berkuat kuasa serta-merta.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah dalam kenyataannya semalam berkata, sekatan itu termasuk warganegara asing yang pernah berada di bandar Daegu dan daerah Cheongdo dalam tempoh 14 hari sebelum ketibaan ke Malaysia.

"Sekatan turut melibatkan pelawat yang melakukan transit melalui Malaysia," katanya.

Keputusan itu dicapai dalam mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Kerja Kluster Covid-19 bersama pelbagai agensi yang disclaraskan oleh Agensi Pengurusan Bencana Negara (Nadma) melibatkan KKM, Kementerian Dalam Negeri (KDN), Imigresen, Kementerian Luar dan agensi-agensi lain.

Dr Noor Hisham berkata, rakyat Malaysia, penduduk tetap dan pemegang pas (pas lawatan sosial jangka panjang dan pas pelajar) yang pernah berada di bandar



DR NOOR HISHAM

Kerajaan mengenakan sekatan masuk sementara terhadap semua pelawat dari Korea Selatan berkuat kuasa serta-merta bagi mengelak penularan Covid-19.

Daegu dan daerah Cheongdo dalam tempoh 14 hari sebelum ketibaan ke Malaysia perlu menjalani saringan kesihatan oleh Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM).

Menurutnya, bagi meningkatkan kawalan di pintu-pintu masuk antarabangsa, Jabatan Imigresen turut menyediakan kaunter khas untuk pelawat dari Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran.

"KKM akan terus memantau secara rapi perkembangan jangkitan koronavirus (Covid-19) di Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali, Iran dan negaranegara lain yang turut melaporkan kes Covid-19," katanya.

Beliau turut menasihatkan rakyat

Malaysia agar menangguhkan perjalanan ke wilayah-wilayah atau bandar-bandar yang diisyiharkan sebagai kawasan wabak di China, Korea, Jepun, Itali dan Iran.



"Lebih Warna
Sinar Harian Setiap Ahad, Bermula 1 Mac



Warga Jepun, Itali disah positif

PUTRAJAYA - Sebanyak dua kes baharu positif wabak koronavirus (Covid-19) direkodkan di Malaysia melibatkan warga Jepun dan Itali.

Ia menjadikan jumlah kumulatif sebanyak 25 kes dengan tiga daripadanya sedang mendapatkan rawatan, manakala 22 kes yang lain telah pulih dan dibenarkan pulang.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah dalam kenyataan semalam berkata, wanita Jepun berusia 41 tahun itu mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke negara tersebut pada Januari lalu dan Indonesia pada awal bulan ini.

"Pesakit mempunyai gejala demam dan telah mendapat rawatan pada 17 Februari sebelum dimasukkan ke hospital swasta tiga hari kemudian.

"Wanita itu yang bekerja di Malaysia disahkan positif pada 27 Februari dan sedang dirawat di wad isolasi Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL)," katanya.

Bagi kes melibatkan warga Itali, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, pesakit berkenaan mula mengalami gejala demam, batuk, sakit sendi dan badan sehari selepas pulang dari Itali.

"Lelaki berusia 54 tahun yang menetap di Malaysia mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke Itali atas urusan kerja pada 15 hingga 21 Februari yang lalu dan telah dimasukkan ke wad isolasi Hospital Sungai Buloh," katanya.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 18
RUANGAN : NEWS/NATION

ERADICATING POLIO

1 MILLION IN SABAH TO BE VACCINATED

All three cases confirmed in Malaysia originated from the same state

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THE Health Ministry has received 2.5 million doses of monovalent type 2 oral polio vaccine (mOPV2) from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the purpose of inoculating 1 million children under 13 in Sabah.

The vaccines were commissioned from the stockpiles of the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (Unicef), said Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

He said Malaysia had recorded three confirmed cases of polio so far.

The first case was recorded in Tuaran involving a three-month-old on Dec 8.

Putrajaya in January also announced two additional cases.

An 8-year-old in Sandakan was stricken with a fever on Dec 9.

Another case involved an 11-year-old from Semporna.

"The virus was also detected in five samples of wastewater in Kota Kinabalu and Semporna."

Noor Hisham said that

Malaysia had released supplementary funds to conduct campaigns for bivalent Oral 1 Polio Vaccine (bOPV) for children throughout Sabah from Dec 27.

The health department in Sabah was working with the health authorities as well as other state agencies and NGOs to eradicate polio.

"We are collaborating with WHO and Unicef to control the outbreak and this effort will be continuous until polio is eradicated.

"The mOPV2 vaccine from Unicef is a supplementary vaccine to bOPV that is provided by the government.

"This is to ensure that immunisation coverage is complete."

He said that all children under 13 would be given both the oral vaccines despite their vaccination status.

Noor Hisham said that the vaccine was safe and would have to be administered several times to children for optimal effect.

The Health Ministry urges parents, guardians and those working or running nurseries, kindergarten and schools to ensure that children have been inoculated."

Malaysia reported its first polio case in nearly three decades in December, after the three-month-old boy from Tuaran, Sabah was confirmed with the disease.

It has been 27 years since its eradication.



Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah (centre) helping to administer the oral polio vaccine on children in Pulau Gaya last month. PIC BY KHAIRULL AZRY BIDIN

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NATION

Pandemic plan to tackle Covid-19

Expert: Document used in H1N1 can be used as guide for current situation

By LOH FOON FONG
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KUALA LUMPUR: The government can turn to the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan (NIPPP) it developed in 2006 should the Covid-19 outbreak turn pandemic, says Universiti Malaya academician Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Lam Sui Kit.

A pandemic, according to WHO, is when there is a sudden increase in the number of cases all over the world, usually affecting a large number of people.

Currently, WHO has only declared the outbreak an international emergency and not a pandemic.

NIPPP was developed by the Health Ministry following the Nipah outbreak in Malaysia in 1999, with the plan containing a comprehensive response to the influenza pandemic, said Dr Lam, adding that NIPPP was tested during the 2009 H1N1 outbreak.

"This document, although pre-



pared for the influenza pandemic, is useful as a guide for Covid-19 should we face a pandemic," he said in a statement yesterday.

"That's because the transmission mechanism for Covid-19 is in many ways more similar to H1N1 than the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)."

Part of the plan involves preparedness to conduct laboratory confirmation tests for suspected cases.

"In this case, the Institute for Medical Research has developed a specific test for Covid-19 that can deliver conclusive results in only five to six hours," he said, adding that this test was now available in

several major hospitals in the country.

"Malaysia has enough experience to handle pandemics, but we still have to take stock of what we have and ensure that we have adequate supplies of essentials, including food."

WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus recently said he was deeply concerned about the number of new cases in recent days, especially in South Korea, Italy and Iran.

However, he did not feel it is time to declare a pandemic until there is uncontrollable global spread and large-scale severe disease or deaths.

Dr Lam said the last time WHO declared a pandemic was in 2009, following the worldwide spread of H1N1.

SARS, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, Ebola and Zika outbreaks did not meet the conditions even though the cases were severe and fatality rates high, he added.

Most Covid-19 cases have been in

China's Hubei province, with the country having reported more than 80,000 cases and over 2,600 deaths.

Currently, 50 countries are affected, and more cases are emerging outside of China, especially in South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran.

Recently, the United States reported its first community transmission in California.

All these reports are definitely pushing WHO to seriously consider declaring Covid-19 a pandemic.

"It is not if, but when," said Dr Lam, adding that regardless of what WHO would declare, it was important for Malaysia to be prepared for this eventuality.

For example, the US Department of Homeland Security recommended that people store a two-week supply of water and food, he said.

"Health services will be taxed to the maximum in a pandemic and we should therefore be ready to treat minor ailments ourselves by stocking up over-the-counter medications for (minor) ailments such as

cough and colds, stomach remedies, pain relievers, especially in households with children.

Those who are on prescription drugs for chronic illnesses (diabetes, heart diseases, asthma) should get additional supplies.

"Also, store a reasonable supply of face masks and hand sanitiser," he said.

Businesses and companies must be prepared to ask their staff to work from home where possible, while schools could be closed, he said.

Universiti Malaya virologist Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said Malaysia should begin preparations for the most vulnerable segments of society, as any outbreak among them could overwhelm the system.

"A lot more messages on prevention in languages they understand are needed, as most are currently targeted at urban folks," he said, adding that there was also a need to engage community leaders and teachers.

Two more new cases detected

KUALA LUMPUR: Two more new Covid-19 cases have been detected, bringing the total reported cases in the country to 25.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said that the 24th case was a Japanese woman, 41, who worked in Malaysia.

She had travelled to Japan in January and also to Indonesia in early February.

She had fever and sought treatment on Feb 17. She was admitted to a private hospital on Feb 20 and a Covid-19 test taken showed it was positive.

"She is currently being treated at the isolation ward in Hospital Kuala Lumpur," said Dr Noor Hisham in a statement yesterday.

The 25th case is an Italian man, 54, who is married to a local and lives in Malaysia.

He had travelled to Italy for work from Feb 15 to 21. He started having fever, cough, joint pains and body aches the following day.

"He received outpatient treatment from Feb 23 to 25. On Feb 28, a Covid-19 test confirmed he was infected," said Dr Noor Hisham, adding that the man had been admitted to the isolation ward in Hospital Sungai Buloh.

Meanwhile, Malaysia has imposed a temporary ban on all visitors from South Korea (including foreigners) who had travelled to Daegu city and Cheoaldo district in the last 14 days.

Dr Noor Hisham said the decision was made after the Covid-19 clusters committee meeting with various agencies.

The temporary ban includes those who are transiting in Malaysia, he said.

However, Malaysians, permanent residents and social visit pass holders who had been in those areas within 14 days before arriving Malaysia need to be screened by the Health Ministry, he said.

To enhance control of international entry points, the Immigration Department will prepare special counters for visitors from South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran, he said.

Woman thanks medical team which cared for her parents

KUALA LUMPUR: The daughter of the 83-year-old American female who recovered from Covid-19 has expressed gratitude to the medical team at Sungai Buloh Hospital for taking care of her parents.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah posted on his Facebook the note from the unnamed daughter, which was addressed to consultant infectious disease expert Dr Benedict Sim and his team.

The note read: "Dr Benedict, I want to thank you and the whole team of doctors, nurses and staff who took care of my parents."

"You all are truly wonderful, kind and talented people. My whole family wants to express our deepest gratitude.

"Best wishes. Thanks so much for everything."

Dr Noor Hisham said the American woman (also known as case 22) was tested positive twice on Feb 15, and was treated with lopina-



Full of gratitude:
The American cruise ship passengers leaving Hospital Sungai Buloh after they were discharged. They are flanked by hospital staff. — Picture courtesy of Health Ministry

vir/ritonavir (both antiretrovirals), recovered fully and discharged on Thursday after two consecutive tests proved negative.

Her husband tested negative for

Covid-19, but was admitted for treatment for severe pneumonia, he said, adding that the man too has been discharged.

"I would like to congratulate Dr

(C.) Suresh (Kumar), Dr Benedict and our staff in Sungai Buloh Hospital for the great care given to the couple. My heartfelt thank you, all," said Dr Noor Hisham.

Malaysians urged to defer trips to four countries

By FATIMAH ZAINAL
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysian holidaymakers may have to forgo their wish to catch the sakura season in Japan and South Korea or savour Italian street food in Milan as Covid-19 continues to spread in these countries.

In a Twitter statement on Thursday, the Health Ministry said Malaysians should defer their travels to countries with significant uptick of Covid-19 cases, namely South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran.

A majority of travellers had already cancelled their trips to these countries, while some chose to defer to other dates, said Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) president Datuk Tan Kok Liang.

"Travel agencies have been receiving cancellations since early February, especially to countries which reported new outbreaks of Covid-19."

"This includes cancellations for departures after June," said Tan when asked on the impact of Covid-19.

19 on outbound trips.

He said that in light of these extraordinary circumstances, airlines should consider refunds for travellers who had purchased tickets to the affected countries.

Tan said many customers made cancellations without considering the various airlines' refund policy, and then insisting on a full refund despite the matter not being offered by the airlines.

Some also sought refunds through the Tribunal for Consumer Claims, said Tan.

"However, this small claims court is biased towards consumers, and is guided by antiquated regulations that have not been revised for over 20 years, when costs were much lower," he said.

He added that the best solution would be for airlines to waive the normal conditions given the extraordinary circumstances.

Tan also hoped customers who cancelled their travel arrangements with any travel agency would understand the commitment and cost incurred by the agency.

"If the customer initiates the can-

cellation, he should pay for the arrangement that has been made by the travel agency.

"Or they can continue with the travel arrangement as scheduled while taking extra precautionary measures," he said.

MATTA also advised its members to have a comprehensive and clear sales contract for customers and that it will be explained clearly to them.

They should emphasise on portions that can be refunded in full, in part, or totally non-refundable, in accordance with the cancellation policy of the agency's various suppliers.

"Travel agents will only charge an administration fee of up to RM300," he said, adding that Malaysians could look into exploring the hidden gems in the country as now is the best time to travel locally.

When contacted, South Korean destination management company Eutourism Korea said it was indeed said the Health Ministry had advised Malaysians to postpone their South Korean trips.

However, its assistant manager Lucy Hong said given the anxiety over Covid-19, the company itself would recommend postponing South Korean trips until Covid-19 was more manageable.

"If you take precautionary measures such as wearing a mask and washing your hands, then there should be no problem with the tour," she said.

"However, visitors will still be anxious during the tour, while we want visitors to be relaxed during their visit to Korea."

"Therefore, we recommend postponing the tour until the virus problem disappears," said Hong in an email reply.

She added that the South Korean authorities were doing their best to solve the outbreak, which she believed would be soon.

South Korea is the biggest Covid-19 centre outside China, with over 1,500 cases and at least 13 deaths.

This is followed by Italy (453 cases, 12 deaths), Japan (189 cases, three deaths) and Iran (141 cases, 22 deaths), according to the Health Ministry's figures on Thursday.