



20 MAY, 2021

## Steep increase a warning to all

The Star, Malaysia





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## Health experts remind Malaysians to play their part in flattening Covid-19 curve

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**PETALING JAYA:** As Covid-19 deaths and infections continue to set daily records, Malaysians are asking how they can keep safe from the disease that has claimed more than 2,000 lives.

However, the reply from experts remains the same – play your part to flatten the curve to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Prof Dr Moy Foong Ming from Universiti Malaya's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine said the new record of 6,075 daily cases yesterday should serve as a grave warning.

"We could become a second India if we don't follow the SOP," she said.

Some people still feel that it is okay to go out without a proper reason because they won't be the unlucky one to contract the coronavirus, she added.

However, she felt that the num-

ber of cases would not come down immediately as the incubation period for the virus is two weeks.

"I think all of us are feeling the pressure, especially those in the healthcare sector and those taking care of patients," she said.

Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh, a professor with the Health Economics and Public Health department of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, said the rise in reported cases could be due to mass screenings being conducted, especially in Selangor.

"I hope other states are aggressively trying to do this as it will identify the problematic areas.

"Most of the cases are asymptomatic and they could be infecting others unknowingly," she said, adding that the actual number of cases could be four times higher than what was being reported.

While a strict lockdown is the best way to curb cases, she said it may cause other issues such as an economic slowdown, an increase in domestic violence and depression.

Dr Sharifa also felt that the government needed to aggressively speed up the pace of the vaccination programme.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah stressed the importance of people playing their part as the healthcare system in the Klang Valley was under tremendous pressure.

"Frontliners are drained and fatigued. Help us so that we are still able to help you if and when the time comes. Stay at home if you have no urgent matters outside and comply with the SOP," he said in a Facebook post.

On social media, many Malaysians argued that the only way to bring down Covid-19 figures was by enforcing a stricter lockdown nationwide.

"Please impose a total MCO for three weeks nationwide. Businesses may suffer but they will come back stronger when people are healthy," said Lee Dennis on Facebook.

He felt it was time to stop using

the economy as an excuse as the current MCO was not good enough and it was pointless to build more emergency centres.

"Keep everyone at home and stay safe. Let the frontliners do their duties gracefully," he said.

Joanne Koay commented that if there weren't any restrictions to decrease travels, Covid-19 would spread further in the community.

"Time for a full-force MCO 3.0. Advising people to stay at home is crucial," she said, adding that it was important that people did not bring the virus home.

Others also echoed concerns raised by Dr Noor Hisham over the surge in Covid-19 cases, saying that it was vital for the society to abide by the SOP at all times.

"Reading between the lines, it seems that the DG wants us to be more disciplined like we did in MCO 1.0 rather than 3.0. He knows more than us. If he has the authority, he would impose MCO 1.0," said Haiza M. Noor.

Some are criticising the slow pace of the national immunisation programme as implementing another full-scale MCO could trigger an unprecedented economic fallout.

"Why not talk about the vaccine. Total lockdown will make the lower income group suffer more. Anxiety, fear and depression. Many are losing jobs," wrote Angelin Samuel.

Meanwhile, Dr Chandrasegaran Shanmugam said mass vaccination was the only way to achieve the herd immunity target.

He proposed that the government engage doctors and nurses from the private sector as volunteers.

"Set up centres in each state assembly to provide free RTK testing. Test, isolate and manage. Give RM500 assistance to B40 groups for six months. Allow travel for those who have completed vaccination," he added.

The country is under the third MCO where movement is restricted and sectors such as sports and education remain closed.



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### SUMMARIES

As the country's daily Covid-19 cases hit an all-time high and the death toll breached 2,000, experts and the public are calling for a stricter movement control order despite the impact to the economy and for the national immunisation programme to be sped up.  
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ATTENTIVE: Selcare clinic staff checking results for the free Covid-19 screening carried out for the local community in Gombak at Dewan Seri Siantan, Selangor.