

Following S Korea, Malaysia ramps up tests to help 'flatten Covid-19 curve'

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CORONAVIRUS | Health Ministry director-general Noor Hisham Abdullah today said Malaysia is ramping up its testing capacity to similar levels like South Korea.

He said South Korea resorted to mass testing to help slow the spread of Covid-19.

Noor Hisham said when the pandemic broke out, the laboratory testing capacity was only 3,500 tests a day but this had since been increased to 7,000, and will hit 16,500 by next month.

"If we learn from the (South) Korean experience, they do about 20,000 tests a day. So we are not that far, we are (going to) do about 16,500 tests (a day) in the next one or two weeks.

"So we will continue to test more people and, hopefully, we will be able to detect more (infected people)," he told a press conference in Putrajaya today.

To date, the Health Ministry has conducted 18,416 tests. This is up from 9,799 a week ago.

Noor Hisham said the increased testing capacity would help the Health Ministry detect infected persons faster and isolate them sooner to "flatten the curve", this would prevent exponential growth of new Covid-19 cases that could overwhelm the healthcare system.

"We will look at the target group. For example, certain groups that we think are high risk, then we target them.

"If we can pick them up early, then it will be much better, we will isolate them and treat them. That is our plan in terms of using the tests," he said.

He said it was essential to "flatten the curve" so that healthcare workers won't be put in a position where they must decide who gets a ventilator and who doesn't.

To date, Malaysia has recorded 1,624 confirmed Covid-19 cases with 15 deaths.

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