

M'sians fleeing global lockdown fuel concern of imported Covid-19 cases

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CORONAVIRUS | The Health Ministry is concerned over a possible wave of imported Covid-19 cases caused by Malaysians returning home from abroad.

As of noon today, health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah (above, centre) said that 752 citizens have been placed under quarantine after arriving on Malaysian shores.

Eight of them exhibited symptoms when screened and have since been sent to hospitals for further tests.

As more countries go under lockdown, he expects a rise in both homecoming Malaysians and imported cases.

“Now the figures (of those flying home) have increased because the students are coming back as well.

“Some of the workers overseas, because of the clampdown in more than 172 countries, are also coming back [...]

“Those coming back from these countries have a possibility of bringing (back) the infection. So our concern [...] is imported cases now,” he said during the ministry’s daily press conference in Putrajaya this evening.

From April 3, all citizens returning from abroad will be screened and quarantined at designated facilities for 14 days.

Community service during MCO not feasible

Asked about the Prisons Department’s suggestion that movement control order violators be sentenced to community service rather than jail time, Hisham said the idea was not feasible.

“At the moment we have the MCO, so we only can put them (the violators) in prison or a place where we can quarantine them,” he opined.

Those who violate MCO rules can be fined up to RM1,000 or jailed for up to six months or both. As of April 2, 378 have been jailed for such violations.

The Prisons Department had proposed the idea as prisons were already overcrowded, making social distancing “impossible” and raising the risk of Covid-19 contagion among inmates and staff.

Hisham, however, said that the ministry was enforcing social distancing rules in prisons.

“We are doing the screening for them in the prisons as well.

“We are trying to avoid public gatherings and even in prisons we try to space them out and make sure social distancing is in practice even in prison,” he said.

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