

## **Health DG explains why recent Covid-19 test data are incomplete**

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Both public and private laboratories are undergoing a systems integration exercise to speed up the transmission of data regarding the number of daily tests for Covid-19, as well as to reduce the number of glitches.

"There are glitches now. In the last two days, for example, the negative data had not been submitted to us," said Health Ministry director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, adding that ministry officials had to manually call the labs for the data.

He said the labs are undergoing integration under the 'Sistem Informasi Makmal Kesihatan Awam' (Simka).

"We hope once integrated, all the cases - negative and positive - will flow smoothly and we can actually update the data within 24 hours," he said in a press conference today.

Noor Hisham said every lab previously operated on its own system but the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need for an integrated system of data.

The number of daily laboratory tests had decreased recently, with only 7,774 tests yesterday from 9,279 the day before. There are currently 53 public and private labs conducting tests for Covid-19 with a maximum capacity of 34,951 tests per day.

Noor Hisham also assured that there was no hairdresser cluster, as there had only been one positive case so far – which was a barber who worked at a barbershop in the KL Traders Square.

The barber who tested positive for Covid-19 was found to have given haircuts at client's homes during the movement control order (MCO) despite a ban on the service.

Since he tested positive and was hospitalised, 40 of his close contacts had been screened and instructed to undergo home quarantine.

On a separate issue, Noor Hisham said they were still not sure whether the death of the 67-year-old Indian national from the Bukit Jalil immigration depot cluster who passed away on June 12 was due to Covid-19 or another illness.

He said the Health Ministry detected that the man was positive for Covid-19 before his body was transferred to the forensics department for a post-mortem as that was part of the ministry's new standard operating procedure (SOP).

There had been cases where the virus was detected on the skin surface or in the bodily liquid of dead bodies. In order to reduce the risk of exposure for officers at the forensics department, Noor Hisham said the ministry tested bodies for Covid-19 before they were sent to forensics.

“So when we did the test (on the body of the Indian national), the test was positive, but whether the patient died because of Covid-19 or some other disease, we have to look at the post-mortem first,” he said.

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