

'Targeted enhanced MCO on 4 Sabah districts may be widened to other areas'

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COVID-19 | The targeted enhanced movement control order (MCO) imposed on four districts in Sabah may be widened to include other areas depending on the development in the state, according to the Health Ministry.

Its director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the order may be expanded while speaking about measures taken by the authorities to curb the spread of the coronavirus in Sabah.

"So far, we have only imposed the order on four districts. But there is a possibility that this measure will also include others.

"We will see (based on) the development at the four districts in the next one or two days," he said at a press conference in Putrajaya today.

The government imposed a 14-day targeted enhanced MCO starting today in

Kunak, Lahad Datu, Tawau and Semporna.

This came after the areas recorded a continuous spike in new Covid-19 cases since early this month.

A risk assessment by the ministry, however, found that the outbreak in Sabah is still under a controllable level, Noor Hisham said.

The targeted enhanced MCO, he added, was imposed so that authorities including health officials can focus more on carrying out case detection activities and implement public health intervention to curb the virus' spread.

These activities are being conducted in areas that have been identified as having a high number of cases.

"From today, we have started the targeted enhanced MCO. However, even though the order is imposed on districts, but our focus is on villages that have been identified.

"Examples are Kampung Sri Tanjong in Tawau and Kampung Bangau-Bangau in Semporna, where we will give 100 percent of our focus.

"Like in Kota Setar, Kedah, there are 28 sub-districts. We did not focus on all 28, but we made a risk assessment and carried out border control and roadblocks, among others," Noor Hisham said.

Meanwhile, asked on whether the ministry was satisfied with the level of compliance by those involved in the Sabah election, he said they would only get the full report in two weeks.

"Previously, the Chini and Slim by-elections did not result in any infection cluster. This means that they had complied with the standard operating procedure (SOP).

"We may only know the full report on Sabah election in two weeks time, on level of compliance and such.

"Maybe we can improve in terms of how campaigns are conducted and SOP compliance. The issue now is with non-compliance of SOP," he added.

Noor Hisham said that the country's R-naught is now at 1.39, while for Sabah, it is 1.42.

This R-naught figure is used by epidemiologists to describe how infectious a disease is. A rate above one meant that its infectivity was increasing.

Based on ministry assessment, if the R-naught figure reaches 1.6, it is expected that an exponential increase will happen in a short period of time.

"We are still able to contain the infection, provided we continue what we do best.

"We have done it before through border control, roadblocks and public health measures."

He said that health officers from other states have also been deployed to assist the Sabah Health Department in conducting targeted testing and public health intervention measures.

These include officers from Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, Pahang and Kuala Lumpur.

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