

Health DG: Don't let your guard down, learn from the Sabah lesson

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COVID-19 | Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah has again pleaded with Malaysians to not let their guard down against the Covid-19 pandemic as what happened in Sabah lately.

He said all Malaysians must mask up and practice physical distancing and proper hygiene as this had been proven to greatly reduce the spread of the virus.

"The moment we let down our guard, the virus will continue to spread. Sabah is a good example. When we let down our guard, this is what happened.

"(The Health Ministry) hopes that each and every one of us learns this lesson so we do not repeat it again," he said during a press conference today.

Noor Hisham said the cause of the resurgence in Covid-19 cases - currently 1,540 active cases, up 10-fold from a month ago - was because Malaysians were not complying with the guidelines to mask up, maintain physical distancing and practice proper hygiene.

"We are not blaming, we are reminding [...] if you need to go out of your home, put on a mask and practice physical distancing," he said.

He said the Health Ministry understood that there was fatigue as the country had been dealing with the pandemic for 10 months now.

"But remember, we cannot let down our guard. If we let down our guard, there is no fatigue for the virus," he said.

Don't point fingers

Earlier, he urged Malaysians not to blame anyone for the resurgence in Covid-19 cases saying it was the responsibility of all citizens to prevent the spread of the virus.

"The Health Ministry and (government) agencies cannot fight Covid-19 alone.

"The bigger responsibility lies on the shoulders of every individual regardless of rank, background and status.

"Avoid blaming one another. This social responsibility has to be shared in order for us to break the chain of Covid-19 infection in our country.

"We have done it before by taking care of ourselves, our family, community and country," he said.

The Health Ministry and politicians have taken a lot of flak recently over the surge of Covid-19 cases nationwide which resulted from those travelling to Sabah for the state election.

Since Sept 20, 136 Covid-19 cases have been attributed to those with recent travel to Sabah where the election campaign ran for about three weeks.

Compulsory screening for those arriving from Sabah began on Sept 27 which some critics argued was too late.

Worldwide trend

Noor Hisham hoped that the targeted enhanced movement control order (MCO) for four districts in Sabah and the ban on inter-district travel there would eventually reduce the number of cases in the state.

He also advised those returning from Sabah and tested negative to complete a 14-day home quarantine.

Though this was not mandatory, it was recommended.

Currently, anyone returning from Sabah would be issued a home surveillance order (HSO) requiring them to wear a pink wristband and stay at home until they receive a negative Covid-19 test result.

However, there have been several instances where a returnee who tested negative eventually fell ill of Covid-19.

Noor Hisham also said the rising Covid-19 caseload was not unique to Malaysia only.

"This uptrend, which the Health Ministry is concerned about and has been reminding the public daily about, is in line with the uptrend in Covid-19 cases and deaths the world over," he pointed out.

Like Malaysia, various countries had been slowly reopening their economies which then resulted in a resurgence of Covid-19 cases.

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