

Sabah's Covid-19 treatment capacity increases to 4,822 beds - Health DG

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COVID-19 | To cope with the number of Covid-19 cases in Sabah, the Health Ministry has designated Kota Marudu Hospital as another hospital to treat the infection, said Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

He said this brings the total of designated Covid-19 hospitals in the state to seven including Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Women and Children's Hospital in Kota Kinabalu, Duchess of Kent Hospital in Sandakan, Tawau Hospital, Lahad Datu Hospital and Keningau Hospital.

Collectively, these hospitals have a total capacity of 946 beds, including 66 for critical care and 170 respiratory aids, and are allocated to treat Covid-19 cases categories 1 to 5, he said on Facebook today.

Noor Hisham said the Health Ministry has also identified six more low-risk quarantine and Covid-19 treatment centres, bringing the total to 16, with a capacity of 3,876 beds to treat asymptomatic or mild symptoms (categories 1 and

2) in the state.

The addition of these facilities make the capacity of beds to treat Covid-19 patients in Sabah now 4,822 compared to 2,596 beds previously, he said.

Noor Hisham added that as a precautionary measure for hospitals on the east coast of Sabah, the ministry in collaboration with the armed forces planned to create a field hospital to offer obstetric and gynaecological, pediatric and general surgery services to non-Covid-19 patients.

"This will give more space to Tawau Hospital to treat Covid-19 cases in categories 3 to 5, while cases in categories 1 and 2 will continue to be placed in low-risk treatment and quarantine centres (PKRC)," he said.

Noor Hisham said for the initial stage, the field hospital planned to provide 100 beds.

As of Oct 10, Sabah has recorded 3,841 Covid-19 cases with 11 red zones, namely Kota Belud, Tuaran, Kota Kinabalu, Putatan, Penampang, Papar, Sandakan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Semporna and Tawau besides recording 19 clusters.

Expanding health services to cope with hundreds of new cases daily

Sabah Health director Dr Christina Rundi added in her own statement that Sabah hospitals are opening additional wards to cope with the high numbers of new Covid-19 cases.

"Staff from other hospitals from non-high-risk zones are being drafted to help cope with the additional workload.

Regarding the issue of more than half of the nurses working in the ICU ward of Queen Elizabeth II (QE2) Hospital being made to undergo quarantine after at least one colleague tested positive for Covid-19, Rundi said it was a necessary protocol.

"On occasion, there are health workers who need to undergo supervision and observation under self-quarantine at home due to being in contact with a person who tested positive for Covid-19, or a family member, colleague or patient has returned from a high-risk area (red zone) and undergone Covid-19 screening and is awaiting results.

"In such a situation, the Sabah Health Department will take appropriate action to ensure that health services are not affected such as mobilising staff from separate units or other facilities that are not involved, she said.

Rundi added that while every day the number of new cases were increasing in the hundreds, this was also due to the high number of Covid-19 screenings daily.

"Active screening is carried out among the contacts of Covid-19 cases, those with symptoms and those who come from red zones," she said.

"Of course this situation causes the wards in the hospital to be so full that the hospital has to open additional wards inside and outside the hospital.

"Such a situation will also increase the burden of health officers who need to work during the treatment period of a large number of patients. The Sabah Health Department is committed to efforts in curbing the spread of Covid-19 infection in the community as well as to ensure that patients admitted to the ward receive optimal treatment," she added.

Kota Kinabalu MP Chan Foong Hin, meanwhile, has questioned if one Sabah deputy chief minister should take charge of the state's Covid-19 efforts.

"Under no circumstances should the health care system in Sabah be allowed to be crippled even if the Chief Minister Hajiji Mohd Noor has been warded due to being tested positive for Covid-19.

"I wish Hajiji a speedy recovery. But in the meantime, I would like to urge Hajiji to immediately assign his official duties to one of his deputies during his stay in the hospital for Covid-19.

"I would expect his deputies to take up the chief minister's responsibilities if Hajiji were unable to perform them himself," he said.

In the recent Sabah cabinet announcement, there was no assignment of the health portfolio to any state cabinet member, although the state government is poised to discuss the matter on Wednesday, according to deputy chief minister Bung Moktar Radin.

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