

Health DG: Most who fled EMCO area likely undocumented migrants

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COVID-19 | Authorities believe that most of the residents who fled Medan 88 in Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi, Sepang are undocumented migrants, according to the Health director-general.

Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said that the migrant workers might have been spooked by the government's decision to impose the enhanced movement control order (MCO) on the area due to a spike of Covid-19 cases there.

"We believe those who fled are undocumented migrants, who were scared that they would be arrested after being screened for Covid-19 and taken to the immigration detention depots.

"This is the group of people which we are worried will run away and pose a risk to others.

"However, authorities will track their whereabouts. And we also urge them to

come forward," he told a presser in Putrajaya today.

Noor Hisham was commenting on the incident in Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi, where 400 residents at Medan 88 did not return home after receiving information that barbed wires would be installed in the area for the implementation of the enhanced MCO.

The area was placed under a 14-day lockdown beginning today after Covid-19 cases were detected there.

The decision to place the area under the enhanced MCO was announced ahead of its implementation by Senior Minister (Security Cluster) Ismail Sabri Yaakob yesterday.

Asked whether the early announcement may have contributed to the problem today, Noor Hisham agreed that such a move posed the risk of people leaving the area where they want to contain the coronavirus.

However, he pointed out that imposing lockdown without early warning also has its problem.

"It might cause some (non-residents) to be trapped in the area, for example,

those who are staying at hotels, they would be trapped for 14 days."

Meanwhile, Noor Hisham reiterated that the decision to impose the conditional MCO nationwide (except for Perlis, Pahang, Kelantan and Sarawak) was necessary and is proven to be the right choice.

He said that the conditional MCO was the best they could do for now to put some restriction on inter-district and interstate travels.

"We cannot control the movement of 6 million people in the Klang Valley," he said, referring to the earlier decision to impose the travel restriction on Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

"Today, the conditional MCO only restricts the social sector, education and sports. But we still have movements in the economic sector.

"Whatever it is, we are trying to minimise the movement (of people). Although it is not 100 percent, at least we can restrict social activities such as weddings and sorts."

Noor Hisham added that the ministry is also looking at how they can improve their case detection drive to control the outbreak.

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