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Najib: Don't spread baseless vaccination info

PM saddened by news of diphtheria deaths

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysians, especially Muslims should not spread baseless information about vaccination, says Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister said he was saddened to read about deaths from diphtheria, an infectious disease that Malaysia had successfully overcome through the use of vaccine.

"The Health Ministry's National Immunisation Programme for Children introduced more than 50 years ago and provided free was based on the Islamic concept.

"Through the immunisation programme, we have successfully overcome and prevented the spread of infectious diseases," he posted on NajibRazak.com.

On Wednesday, Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah hit out at one Imam Muda who had questioned why a child who was not vaccinated and died, was made known.

Describing it as a "shameful act," Dr Noor Hisham said the Imam's postings, riding on religion, were irresponsible and deviated from the true teachings of Islam.

The young preacher allegedly asked how many vaccinated children had died and whether there was a vaccine against road accidents.

Following an uproar, the postings on his Facebook were later removed.

Najib said all efforts would be futile if people spread baseless news which could create doubts about immunisation.

More tragic, he said the false news was

spread using religion by Muslims themselves.

He said the decision by a small group of parents who did not want their children to be vaccinated or adhere to the immunisation programme was worrying.

"This will put their children at risk and allow diseases previously under control to spread again.

"I hope parents, especially Muslims, will prioritise the health of their children and not get influenced easily," he said, while urging those responsible for spreading baseless news to stop.

The Islamic Medical Association Malaysia called upon muftis and religious leaders to convey facts on vaccine to the public.

Its president Prof Datuk Dr Abd Rahim Mohamad said religious groups and communities who were confused about the importance of vaccine should seek answers from those who have the knowledge and expertise in the field such as doctors and specialists.

"The loss of lives, resulting from a disease preventable with vaccination, is regrettable," he said in a statement.

The Malaysian Medical Association said Government agencies and the private sector should work together to ensure that all infants were fully vaccinated according to the immunisation schedule.

Its president Dr John Chew Chee Ming said the association viewed with deep concern deaths from diphtheria infection over the last few weeks.

"Successful preventive measures have been in place for over 30 years and this includes good infant immunisation coverage," he said.