

Dr Mahathir: Special committee needed to manage pandemic

The Malaysian Reserve
- 8/7/2021 pg. 4

Members should not be politicians to keep integrity and priority of the committee intact, which is to reduce Covid-19 cases and ensure they don't resurface

by SHAHEERA AZNAM SHAH

IT IS high time a special committee consisting of experts from various sectors is established to scrutinise the health, economic and social aspects to effectively tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister said the special committee members should not be politicians to keep the integrity and priority of the committee intact, which is to reduce the Covid-19 cases and ensure that they would not resurface.

"Bringing down the cases should be the country's priority right now, not politics. Tackling the coronavirus is a serious matter as it could lead to fatalities.

"It is a shame that other countries that have a higher population than Malaysia already managed to control the Covid-19 infection in their countries," he said during a virtual forum titled "Reset Malaysia: Permasalahan dan Solusi" yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said there is no excuse for Covid-19 cases to surge again as the government has been given supplemental power to take the necessary actions to take the country out of the pandemic.

"During an Emergency, the government usually has an exceptional power to do what is necessary to improve the situation, but we have seen otherwise for Malaysia.

"The daily cases are averaging around 7,000 at the moment and the number has multiplied from what we have seen earlier.

"It shows that the government does not know how to keep the cases down despite the additional power," he said.

Commenting on Malaysia's vaccination process, Dr Mahathir said there is a lack of urgency in the rollout as the waiting time for an indi-



Workers waiting to be vaccinated at a Public-Private Partnership Covid-19 Industry Immunisation Programme centre in Shah Alam. Dr Adeeba says Malaysia can improve its vaccination process by digitisation

Pic by Muhd Amin Naharul

vidual to get an appointment could be months after the registration.

Meanwhile, infectious diseases expert Prof Datuk Dr. Adeeba

Kamarulzaman said the state of public healthcare should be the focal point during this crucial period of battling the pandemic.

"There are many lessons that we can learn from it. One of the reasons why we are struggling is that public health has been under-invested.

"We are expecting the government hospitals and teaching hospitals to take all the burden, yet we have a large pool of resources in the private sector."

She said with the increasing number of cases and over-utilised capacity of public healthcare, it is time to mobilise available resources, as well as digitise and automate the administration system of the health facilities.

"We cannot work in silos as we have yet to know the full picture of the situation. The surge in cases could be due to the new variant.

"The vaccine rollout was quite slow, but I believe with new batches of vaccines that Malaysia is receiving, the vaccination can pick up pace.

"Take Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore, for example. They use a wide range of digitisation in their vaccination process and if we want to improve ours, that is one area that we should tap into," she said.