

# MySejahtera no longer needed for contact tracing, experts say

*The app is no longer as useful as it was in the earlier phases of the pandemic, MMA says*

by AUFA MARDHIAH

**THERE** would not be much use for the movement tracing feature of the MySejahtera app, except for vaccine digital certificates and status.

Public Health Physician and Epidemiologist Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said he did not see any use of MySejahtera if there was too much controversy around it.

"We currently use it more for the digital vaccine certificate and status, however, as time goes by, the function is no longer needed, unless the government wants to do a sentinel surveillance which is not needed for everyone, just for certain people," he said.

Similarly, Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Koh Kar Chai said the use of the MySejahtera app for the purpose of contact tracing is no longer as useful as it was in the earlier phases of the pandemic and believed that the app may have outlived its usefulness for contact tracing.

"With the large numbers of positive cases within and surrounding us, contact tracing

will not be adopted on a wide scale as it will not yield the expected results.

"However, the contact tracing feature of the app should still be preserved as we will not know when the next pandemic will turn up," he said in a statement yesterday.

Dr Koh also stated that the app can be adapted to be used as a personal health record as it is already linked to individual IDs and is non-transferable.

However, he said the worrisome matter would be in terms of the security of the data.

"The app cannot and should not be an access to the electronic medical records (EMR)

SEE P4 COI 1

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system whereby one's full medical history from birth can be accessed, though things may change in the future as the IT world evolves and security issues are managed.

"What is lacking in the country's healthcare structure is a centralised management system for the health records of our population. There is a need for a secured EMR system accessible by the healthcare providers which is seamless," he said, adding that currently healthcare records are not accessible across healthcare facilities or providers.

"Before we can embark on using MySejahtera as a tool to be used in a national EMR system, it is pertinent that the security issues surrounding the app be addressed soon, as the trust deficit of the public here is very apparent," he added.

Dr Koh also suggested for the app to be used in allowing access to existing medical conditions and treatment history that is stored in the phone, while at the same time allowing an easy sharing of recent medical history with healthcare professionals and caregivers with the access under the control of the individual.

The issue of MySejahtera's acquisition by a private party has put many people ill at ease as they fear that their personal data will be exposed.

Previously, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar said the government had decided in November last year that

the app would be government-owned, and approval was obtained in February this year for the Health Ministry (MoH) and MySJ Sdn Bhd to begin negotiations for a two-year contract.

He also assured that the data in the MySejahtera application is owned by MoH and will not be shared with any government agency or private entity.

Meanwhile, lawyer and Malaysian United Democratic Alliance co-founder Lim Wei Jiet believed that the matter of making it mandatory for people to use the MySejahtera app falls under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988.

"Based on the chronology, the government approached KPISoft Sdn Bhd to develop MySejahtera as a corporate social responsibility — there was no agreement but MoH said it is protecting all the data.

"The government has an obligation to ensure that personal data is protected under the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) 2010, where there are enforcement officers making sure that if a private entity is outsourced to run MySejahtera and manage the data, this private entity adheres to all regulations under PDPA," he told *The Malaysian Reserve* recently.

He also believed that PDPA does not prevent commercialisation.

"The issue is whether the consent to use the data is asked and granted or not. You must get the consent from users to use their data, which

currently in the app there is none.

"Most people will not consent because they would not want their personal activities to be exposed to a private party," he added.

It is still mandatory for MySejahtera users to check in at premises but as the country moves into the endemic phase, Lim believed that ideally the government should not make it mandatory or deem it an offence if people did not scan.

"At the end of the day, the strategy has to move away from tracing. In the endemic phase, people are going about life as before while taking precautions, so there is no more need to trace and track people's movement," he said.

Yesterday, Khairy revealed that the government is mulling scrapping the "Check-in" feature from MySejahtera, pending its observation of the infection situation after Malaysia's border reopens tomorrow.

He said MoH would be observing the mobility and infection patterns for several weeks before making a decision.

"We want to see, with the border reopening and also with the exemptions that we will give beginning April 1, if there are changes in the mobility pattern and also the infection pattern for several weeks. If there are no significant changes, then we can stop," he said after the closing ceremony of MyVIFiter 1.0 Integrated Weight Management Programme and World Physical Activity Day 2022 yesterday.