



The Malaysia Agro Exposition Park Serdang in Selangor is being converted into a makeshift hospital. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

Nationwide disinfection to focus on Covid-19 hotspots

PUTRAJAYA: The government will conduct a nationwide disinfection exercise from tomorrow to stop Covid-19 from spreading, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob yesterday.

The disinfection process, he said, would be conducted by the Housing and Local Government Ministry through local councils with the cooperation of the Fire and Rescue Department.

"The disinfection exercise will focus on Covid-19 hotspots and public areas. It will also be carried out at People's Housing Projects, as well as government departments and agencies.

"The hotspots include two villages (in Simpang Renggam) in Kluang, Johor. Both villages have been placed under the Enhanced Movement Control Order."

Since March 23, Ismail Sabri said, Kuala Lumpur City Hall had conducted 11 disinfection exercises involving 11 markets under its jurisdiction.

He said the government had brought home 2,612 of the 3,162 Malaysians stranded in 60 countries.

Malaysians stranded in Egypt, he said, would be brought home on a special flight today.

"Malaysians (who are stranded in Egypt) will be flown from Cairo to Brunei to Malaysia."

Yesterday morning, a major disinfection exercise was carried out around Seri Petaling Mosque, which has been identified as Southeast Asia's Covid-19 hotspot following a massive tabligh gathering there last month.

For the first time ever, Kuala Lumpur City Hall and Alam Flora deployed more than 100 trucks and 100 personnel to carry out a thorough disinfection there.

The workers, who were divided into two teams, began disinfecting the mosque and nearby areas at 9.30am. One team carried out disinfection work on foot, while the other was on trucks.

The areas covered during the exercise included Jalan Radin, Jalan Radin Anum, Jalan Radin Tengah, Jalan Radin Anum 2, Jalan Radin Anum 1, Jalan Radin Bagus, Jalan Radin Bagus, Jalan Radin Bagus 3, Jalan 3/149J, Jalan 1/149D and Jalan Merah Silu.

The joint cleaning operation by City Hall and its agencies was the to be first conducted in one of the two Covid-19 "red zones" here.

Lembah Pantai, Seputeh, Bukit Bintang, Kepong, Titiwangsa, Setiawangsa and Wangsa Maju are included in the red zones.

The exercise was conducted following a directive from the National Security Council and the Health Ministry.

LACK OF EQUIPMENT

Federal Territories Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa said the country needed advanced disinfection equipment for major sanitisation work to be carried out smoothly.

He said Malaysia lacked equipment to carry out large-scale disinfection exercises, a matter that would be brought up with the government.

He said the problem was evident when observing the equipment being used for disinfection exercises.

"It is obvious that we don't have enough or suitable assets that should be used in cities such as Kuala Lumpur. We need the right technology.

"Our technology is not up to date. We need to look at how other countries handle the situation, especially the equipment they use.

"For example, if we use the same equipment we are using now, it will take us days to cover a few hundred square metres when we actually need to carry out disinfection exercises regularly."

Present was Mayor Datuk Nor Hisham Ahmad Dahlan.

Annuar said the lack of suitable equipment would be addressed at a National Security Council meeting on the Federal Territories yesterday.

He said the Housing and Local Government Ministry had requested an allocation of RM20 million for disinfection work nationwide.

"But of course, a bulk of it will be used for the Federal Territories, which has the highest number of cases.

"The disinfection work at Seri Petaling Mosque is our pilot test to determine the effectiveness of our equipment and methods, as well as to see if we have sufficient assets and manpower."

He said the exercise would help in the development of a standard operating procedure to deal with such crises in the future.

"There are many things the authorities can learn from this crisis and we should not take it lightly."

On the RM250 billion Prihatin Rakyat stimulus package, he said the initiative was timely to ensure the stability of the economy.

"This is to ensure that the people will always have money in their pockets.

"The intervention is needed and the government doesn't have a choice but to come up with a massive stimulus package."

Page 1 pic: Workers disinfecting the parking area of Seri Petaling Mosque in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

159 new cases, death toll rises to 27

PUTRAJAYA: A 61-year-old man from Johor became the country's latest Covid-19 fatality, bringing the total number of deaths to 27.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the man died at 10.50am yesterday after he was transferred from Tangkak Hospital in Tangkak, Johor, to Sultanah Fatimah Specialist Hospital in Muar this week.

He said up to yesterday, there were 159 new Covid-19 cases, bringing the total number of infections to 2,320.

He said 61 people were discharged yesterday, bringing the total number of those who had recovered from Covid-19 to 320.

"A total of 73 Covid-19 cases are being treated in the intensive care unit and 54 of those cases require respiratory aid," he said here yesterday.

He said there was an increase in the number of positive cases involving Malaysians who recently returned from abroad.

He urged the public to practise social distancing and stay at home to break the chain of infections.

On cases related to tabligh members who attended a mass



Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

gathering at Seri Petaling Mosque last month, he said 5,084 of them had yet to test for the virus.

"We have screened 17,584 tabligh members.

"There are 1,207 positive cases, 6,648 negative cases and 4,645 are waiting for their results.

"We need to find the remaining 5,084.

"They have yet to be tested and we hope they will come forward soon."

It was reported that 16,000 participants, of which 14,500 were

Malaysians, attended the gathering that was held from Feb 27 to March 3 in Sri Petaling, Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Noor Hisham said a significant increase in the number of Covid-19 cases was expected next month.

He said there were 5,292 beds available in hospitals and more would be added by today.

"We are seeing about 150 to 200 new cases a day.

"But if the number goes up to 1,000 a day, we will have to look for more beds.

"We are expecting a dramatic increase around mid-April. We have made preparations to get more beds.

"It is better for us to be over-prepared. Let us prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

Earlier, in a Facebook post, Dr Noor Hisham said the Health Ministry had set up a special committee to conduct an audit on Covid-19 deaths in hospitals.

He said the National Covid-19 Mortality Review Committee would be chaired by infectious disease consultant Datuk Dr Christopher Lee, who is former Health deputy director-general (research and technical support).