

# 'Onus is on every person'

## Everyone has a role to play to curb spread of virus, say experts

By CLARISSA CHUNG  
clarissachung@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** In the wake of the Sivagangga cluster that was triggered by a home quarantine rule-breaker, health experts have urged Malaysians to always practise strict health and safety standards as they say every single person plays a role in curbing the spread of Covid-19.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the emergence of the cluster showed how the complacent attitude of even one person had led to unwanted outcomes in the entire community.

"This non-compliance to the standard operating procedure has led to the occurrence of new cases of infection in the community.

"With more being infected, the affected community inevitably has to undergo a period of being 'confined' in limited areas and having restricted activities," she said.

"One of the major affected groups is school-children, particularly those who are sitting for major exams. They have just started the session but schools need to close again."

She added that Malaysians needed to step up their commitment to preventing Covid-19 from spreading in the community.

"One of the crucial factors for successful public health measures is community participation. Each of us has to play our role.

"It is highly suggested that every community must be led by their own community leader who should be actively involved in preventive efforts, not just waiting for officials to issue compounds or enforce the regulations," she said.

The Sivagangga cluster emerged in Kedah when a nasi kandar restaurant owner, who returned from Sivagangga in India, broke home quarantine rules.

Since then, the cluster has cumulatively



**Testing times:** Residents of Napoh waiting to undergo Covid-19 testing at Napoh clinic in Jitra, Kedah. — Bernama

seen 21 cases as of yesterday, with four sub-districts in Kedah put under the targeted enhanced movement control order (MCO) from Aug 2-30.

Although restrictions have eased in recent weeks, the country's battle against Covid-19 is still far from over, especially as the number of cases has breached the 9,000 mark.

Authorities have warned that the country will go back to the original MCO if the public keep flouting the rules.

Universiti Malaya virologist Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said the Sivagangga incident served as a lesson that Malaysians must be disciplined and understand the impact of their actions.

"This is a perfect example and a lesson learnt that we should not only care for ourselves. If we love our community, then we have to do our bit," he said.

Prof Sazaly noted that of late many had neglected following the SOP – especially in

recreational spots.

"You go to the beaches and the recreational areas, people are no longer observing the SOP. These are places that are crowded with people, especially those isolated areas where the enforcement officials are not going to inspect."

"I am worried for the next 14 days. The virus usually takes about a week to incubate. If the numbers start going up after that, we will be in big trouble," he added.

He urged the government to improve its testing capacity and capability and to consider using electronic bands to monitor those under home quarantine.

"We have this technology in Malaysia where they use the bands to track a person's movement. Every time someone steps out of the house, it will trigger an alarm.

"The government can rent the device for the duration of the quarantine and that will be cheaper than putting them in a hotel because they can return the band," he said.