

691 CASES

# S.O.P. COMPLIANCE CRUCIAL, AVOID 3Cs

Health experts warn of third wave with possibility of reaching 1,000-mark per day

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As the Covid-19 new positive cases hit an all-time high of 691 yesterday, it is crucial now more than ever to adhere to standard operating procedures (SOP) to keep the virus at bay and break the infection chain, stressed healthcare experts.

Melaka Manipal Medical College's Community and Occupational Medicine Professor Dr G. Jayakumar warned that failure to abide by the SOP would trigger a third wave of infections with cases that could run into thousands daily.

This, he said, could paralyse

the country's healthcare system.

"We can expect the new cases to spike in the next two weeks with the possibility of even reaching the 1,000 mark per day," he said.

He stressed the importance of regular hand washing, practising cough etiquette and wearing face masks as the cornerstone to curbing the third wave.

Dr Jayakumar also said the public should avoid the 3Cs — confined spaces, crowded spaces and close conversation.

The recent congregation of people in Sabah and outbreaks at institutions like prisons, he said, highlighted the impact of close contact, adding that the rise in Malaysia's positive cases was in tandem with the global increase.

"If we let our guard down, things will lead to a crisis mode. When there is a sudden spike of cases, the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) or the Targeted Enhanced Movement Control Order (TEMCO) has to be enforced.

"One may even have to opt for the MCO when the pandemic is anticipated to be heading to a

crisis level."

Dr Jayakumar said TEMCO should be considered for Selangor as the cases were spiking and any delay in doing so might lead to an increase in community infection, considering that it was a populous state.

"This is disastrous as the close proximity of the country's capital city (Kuala Lumpur) with Selangor can create havoc with the nation's economy and health system."

Universiti Sains Malaysia medical epidemiologist Associate Professor Dr Kamarul Imran Musa echoed Dr Jayakumar's views on the importance of heeding the SOP.

He proposed that the public should view everyone near them, except for family members, as those who had contracted the virus. By doing so, everyone would keep their distance from each other.

"It is best to stay 1.8 metres apart," he said, adding that one must not linger in public places for too long and restrict unnecessary travel on top of complying with the SOP.

To control an epidemic, Dr Kamarul stressed that the people's movement must be limited as well as testing and isolating positive cases, including those coming from areas with infections. He was of the view that MCO should be enforced on the red zones and not at yellow or green zones.

On the number of new cases in the coming days, he said it would depend on three factors — how fast the infection was spreading in the community, the number of tests being done, and the intensity of case detection activity.

"As the authorities conduct more tests and active case detections, more Covid-19 cases will be identified. We saw this pattern with Singapore a few months ago.

"The major contribution of cases comes from institutions. If more of these people (from the institutions) have not been screened, then we will see a similar or bigger spike," he said, adding that the number of cases would be between two and three digits for the next 14 days.

Universiti Putra Malaysia epi-

demologist and biostatistics expert Associate Professor Dr Malina Osman expressed confidence that the government, through the ministry as well as the National Security Council, was well prepared to ride out the "storm" since all SOP and strategies were already in place.

She said the Covid-19 active cases could soar to over a total of 3,000 this week and there could be between 200 and 500 new cases daily.

"This is based on the current data where our active cases stood at 2,336 as of Monday. This is depending on the number of those who have been screened.

"We also have to consider the virus strain which is said to have higher transmissibility capability."

Dr Malina said enforcing TEMCO in Selangor would be the best option to arrest a surge in cases.

"However, the best approach will depend in the pattern of infection distribution in the community, estimated range of exposures as well as number of fatalities due to the infection," she said.