

# Infections are down

The Health DG reports positive news on Covid-19 cases since the nationwide lockdown took hold a week ago. But the people are told:

## Right to their doorstep:

Residents of Kampung Muhibbah PPR flats heading to the walk-in mobile vaccination truck in Bukit Jalil. > See report on page 7

# Don't let your guard down

On its part, the government is rolling out mobile vaccination trucks to ensure more in Malaysia are vaccinated. > See page 4 for report by CLARISSA CHUNG

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# Cases going down to below R1

## Dons: It is not good enough to ease safety measures

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**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia is seeing a dip in the Covid-19 infectivity rate. Though this is encouraging, health experts caution the public against taking their foot off the pedal.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the downward trend proved that the preventive measures put in place were effective.

"Our steps to control the outbreak are on track but we have to continue this effort to reduce it further."

"It is a good sign, but if we loosen our grip, the number of infections is set to potentially increase," she said.

Dr Malina added that while the country's R value was showing a decline, the aim would be to push it down to near zero.

The R value, or reproduction number, refers to the infectivity rate of a virus at a particular point in time.

It represents the average number of people an infected person could spread the disease to, so an R value of lower than 1 means that the number of people being infected on average will be fewer over time.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the R value had dropped to below 1 during the first week of the lockdown.

Yesterday, it was recorded at 0.99. On May 31, before the two-week lockdown was implemented, it was 1.09.

Previously, the R value was also recorded at levels of 1.21 and 1.16, on May 23 and May 29, respectively.

International Islamic University Malaysia epidemiologist Prof Dr Jamalludin Ab Rahman said while the R value did show a positive impact, it was not enough.

Malaysia was not out of the woods yet, he said.

"R alone is not enough. For example, we should look at fatality rates, or the number of new clusters."

"Should we be happy with an R value that is lower than 1?"

"Yes. But is the effort enough? Not yet," Dr Jamalludin pointed out.

"The R value has to be persistently low. Until when? There is no precise answer."

He said that while the MCO and lockdown had reduced mobility among the general population considerably, Malaysia was still seeing transmissions in factories.

"The government really needs to settle this source of infections."

"The movement control order can solve sporadic cases in the community but if factories are still operating and close contact in crowded spaces is not being controlled, we will continue to have cases from factories," he added.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Azmi Mohd Tamil agreed.

He said that unless a relational database - where all secondary cases were mapped out to each primary case - it would not be possible to get the accurate average number of secondary persons infected from a single primary case.

"What we have is only an estimate based on a mathematical model."

"As long as we have cases in the community, the outbreak will continue - until the majority of the population is immune to the disease."

At present, Dr Azmi said, "all possible cases of Covid-19 need to be screened, identified and isolate from the susceptible population".

He reckoned that the lockdown should not be lifted on June 14.

"The number of cases does not support that - even though the value is currently below 1," he added.

Infectivity rate dips below 1 on June 6, 2021



Source: Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

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