

'Sporadic cases must be contained'

Countermeasures needed to achieve herd immunity, say experts

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PETALING JAYA: A longer and stricter lockdown, wider mass testing and speedier vaccinations are needed to effectively tackle the recent rise in sporadic cases of Covid-19 in the country, health experts say.

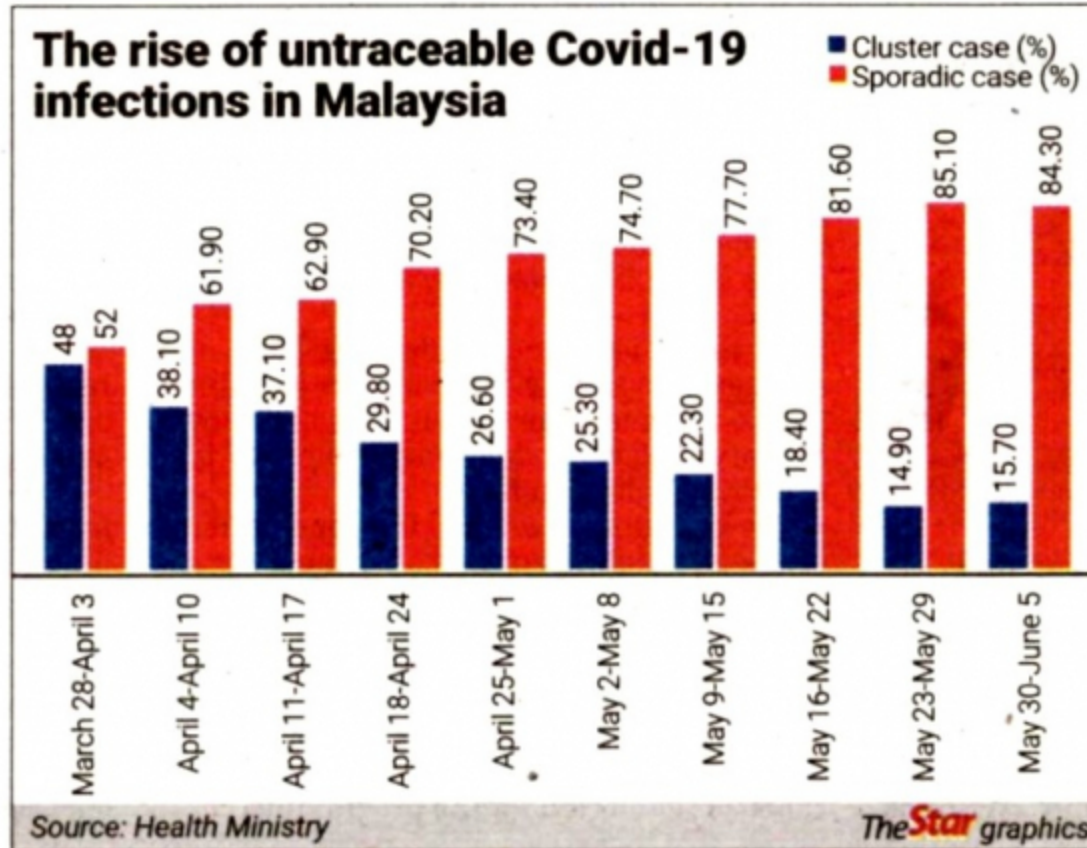
They said poor compliance with standard operating procedures (SOP) and the ability of new SARS-CoV-2 variants to spread more quickly are some of the possible reasons for the increase in such cases.

Sporadic or unlinked transmissions are cases that cannot be linked to any cluster, and a sharp rise is worrying since it shows that the coronavirus is becoming more entrenched in the community.

Many cases recorded in Malaysia used to be linked to clusters, but the situation has changed.

Over the past 10 weeks, the percentage of sporadic cases has shot up from 52% in late March to 84.3% earlier this month, according to the

The rise of untraceable Covid-19 infections in Malaysia



Health Ministry.

Malaysia Medical Association president Datuk Dr Subramaniam Muniandy said poor compliance with SOP, added to unidentified or

untested close contacts in earlier Covid-19 cases, could have led to the high number of sporadic cases.

"A significant number of cases are asymptomatic and therefore,

with poor SOP compliance when travelling or at the workplace, many would have been unknowingly spreading (the disease) or got infected.

"Over time, the source or index cases would be untraceable or unlinkable," said Dr Subramaniam, adding that the government should consider prioritising vaccinations for the 1.57 million people allowed to be present at the workplace during the ongoing lockdown.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the higher transmissibility of new variants might also be a reason why the number of sporadic cases was going up.

She said everyone needed to continue practising all recommended public health measures such as washing their hands regularly, wearing masks or double masking, and physical distancing.

"We need to treat other persons who are not family members who stay in the same house as 'positive' until proven otherwise," she said in advocating for individuals to get

vaccinated as scheduled and to practise self-lockdown.

Universiti Malaya epidemiologist Prof Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud said the fastest way to tackle the rising unlinked infections was to have a total lockdown for two to three months.

"It means infections would be confined to just family members and not spread outside the family.

"Having a lockdown with lots of movement and contact between people means unlinked cases will continue to spread," he said, adding that vaccination needed to be ramped up so that Covid-19 transmissions could be stopped through herd immunity.

Dr Awang Bulgiba said while some might advocate mass testing, it needed to be extensive, done quickly and be followed up by vaccination, to be truly effective.

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