

ENDEMICITY

Experts: Let's stay vigilant in transition phase

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has been transitioning to the endemic phase since April 1, with the resumption of many economic sectors and activities, as well as the presence of people everywhere.

With the transition to endemicity comes the easing of restrictions and standard operating procedures (SOP), paving the way for most activities, including prayer gatherings, to be held like before.

However, health experts urged the public not to take this for granted and also not to downplay the risks of the virus, which was present in the community.

Professor of Medicine and Infectious Diseases at Universiti

Malaya, Datuk Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, urged people to wear a face mask wherever they were, particularly in indoor areas and crowded open spaces, such as Ramadan bazaars.

She added that the SARS-CoV-2 virus (which causes Covid-19 infection) predominantly spreads through the air, so it was crucial for these places to have a good ventilation system.

"Hotels that hold breaking-of-fast functions should ensure that the ventilation in the restaurant and hotel spaces is good.

"Similarly in mosques and surau, it is best to open all doors and windows."

She urged people to ensure that



Datuk Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman



People wearing face masks visiting the Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman Ramadan Bazaar in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

PICTURE BY EIZAIRI SHAMSUDIN

their vaccine doses were completed, including booster doses.

Hospital Kasih Cyberjaya occupational health, emergency and public health expert Dr Hanafiah Bashirun said people needed to follow the three SOP: wear a face mask, maintain physical distancing and frequently sanitise hands.

"The bottom line is that we must comply (with the SOP) be-

cause the goal is to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

"However, if we really want to go in the endemic direction, then we must be good at taking care of ourselves and adhere to the three SOP," he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia senior lecturer and epidemiologist Associate Professor Dr Malina Osman said the transition to endemicity was a trial phase to en-

sure the nation's safe entrance to the full endemic phase.

She added that apart from continuing vaccination efforts, SOP compliance needed commitment from people as well as cooperation from organisations.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah reminded the public to remain vigilant by continuing to wear a face mask. **Bernama**