

No Omicron XE in Malaysia yet, says Health DG

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has yet to record cases of the Omicron XE variant, says Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

“So far not yet,” he said in response to *The Star’s* enquiry.

The ministry previously said random sampling would be conducted at the country’s international gate-

way as well as cases reported at hospitals in order to detect the presence of the new mutation of the Omicron variant.

Dr Noor Hisham had also said efforts to prevent the spread of the variant could be done by continuing to comply with standard operating procedure (SOP), which is com-

plemented with comprehensive screening tests, vaccine coverage and the use of antiviral drugs.

XE is a mix of the previously highly infectious Omicron BA.1 strain, which emerged late last year, and the newer “stealth” BA.2 variant.

Thailand recorded its first case of the Omicron XE on April 2 found

through genomic sequencing of a swab sample taken from a Thai patient at the Centre for Medical Genomics, Ramathibodi Hospital.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman previously predicted that Omicron XE could arrive in the country within a month or two

given that the virus has been detected in Thailand, Taiwan and United Kingdom.

However, she believed the situation would be under control as the country had good vaccination coverage, good adherence to protocols, and measures in place for travellers to limit the spread.