

Health Ministry hopes to double Covid-19 testing capacity to 150,000 daily



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NATION

Thursday, 21 Jan 2021 9:20 PM MYT

PUTRAJAYA: The Health Ministry wants to double its Covid-19 testing capacity to 150,000 a day by establishing more laboratories and enhancing collaboration with the private sector.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said at present, the country is able to produce a maximum of 70,000 tests a day.

"At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, we only had 23 labs that could conduct 1,000 RT-PCR tests daily.

"But today, we have increased the number of labs to 68 nationwide.

"We are hoping that in the near future, we can do 100,000 tests a day and eventually up to 150,000," said Dr Noor Hisham at the ministry's Covid-19 press conference on Thursday (Jan 21).

However, Dr Noor Hisham said the lack of human resources was one reason why the ministry was unable to increase its testing capacity.

He said the ministry's labs, as well as those set up by the private sector, the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, universities and the Armed Forces, needed to be beefed up.

"Some laboratories, we think, can still increase its capacity.

"But we also need to look into human resources and reagents – not just at our ministry but also other labs," he said, adding they could also further maximise use of existing facilities.

Reagents are key chemicals needed for Covid-19 tests.

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