

2.8.2021_NST_MOSTI_ RAMP UP vaccination in states

SPIKE IN COVID-19 CASES

'RAMP UP VACCINATION IN STATES'

This is crucial to prevent their healthcare systems from collapsing

THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2021
KUALA LUMPUR
NEWSPAPER.COM

THE Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme (NIP) needs to be ramped up, especially in states that are seeing a sudden spike in fresh infections to effectively control the spread of the virus.

Epidemiologist Professor Datuk Dr Awang Bulgtha, Awang Mahmod said, judging by the total number of vaccine doses administered daily, which has hit 500,000 shots on some days, the NIP is on schedule to complete the nation's inoculation drive by year end.

However, he said, there was a need to accelerate vaccination in all other states, particularly Sabah, Terengganu, Kelantan, Penang, Perak, Kedah, Pahang, and Johor, which are experiencing high numbers of new infections every day.

This, he said, was also crucial to prevent the states' healthcare systems from reaching a breaking point as witnessed in the Klang Valley.

"The Klang Valley is now ramping up its vaccination drive, but is still some way off a respectable



A man getting vaccinated against Covid-19 at Istana Duta Besar at Kota Damansara yesterday. PIC COURTESY OF THE MOH

degree of population level immunity as the proportion of second doses is still less than 50 percent but it will likely get there soon.

"Once the Klang Valley has vaccinated the majority of its population, we can expect new infection and hospitalisation rates to somewhat ease in this region. But vaccination must need to be ramped up in all the other states.

"Melaka and Kedah really need

to boost their vaccination rates to enable them to get a grip on the number of new infections.

"All the states should emulate those that have been doing well in the vaccination programme," he told the New Straits Times.

A total of 20,532,660 vaccine doses had been administered nationwide up to Saturday, involving 12.8 million first jabs while 6.7 million recipients had completed

both doses.

The Health Ministry's data revealed that the number of new Covid-19 cases in some states had recorded a five-fold increase compared with the numbers registered at the beginning of the month.

Terengganu, for instance, saw the steepest rise in new cases. The state recorded only 60 cases on July 1 and 70 cases on July 15. However, the number shot up to

885 on Saturday.

Kedah, meanwhile, recorded a shocking spike from 220 cases on July 1 to 645 on July 15 and 1,389 on Saturday. In Kelantan, the number of cases rose from 306 on July 1 to 255 on July 15 and 510 on Saturday.

In Johor, the number of cases surged from 290 on July 1 to 590 on July 15 and 1,144 on Saturday, and in Sabah, the cases increased from 232 at the start of the month to 350 within two weeks and 1,038 on Saturday.

Dr Awang Bulgtha, who is also the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry's Covid-19 Epidemiological Analysis and Strategies Task Force chairman, said the seven-day incidence density was high for Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negri Sembilan, Putrajaya, Melaka and Kedah.

He said the seven-day incidence density was also rising in Sabah, which had the lowest proportion of vaccinated people.

"If supply constraints are the cause of the bottleneck, then some reorganisation of supplies will need to be done."

He added that Sarawak had done very well in vaccinating its population despite enormous logistical challenges.

However, he cautioned against easing of restrictions prematurely, which could hamper efforts to contain the spread.

Sarawak, he said, was also starting to monitor the effectiveness of its vaccination programme, which was commendable.