

1. Authorities To Boost Road Safety of Student

MEASURES: Education department wants traffic lights installed and visibility of zebra crossings or yellow lines improved

ALOR STAR: SEVEN-YEAR-OLD Muhammad Syazril Mohd Shahrizal was all excited to start schooling at SK Haji Hassan Hitam in Simpang Empat here while in Gunung Keriang, Nur Afizah Baquri, 15, returned to SMK Sri Gunong with her twin sister Nur Afifi for the new school term.

Both Syazril and Nur Afizah were not related but they shared the same fate after the duo were killed in separate accidents front of their respective schools, just five days after the beginning of the new school term this year.

Syazril was killed on the spot after the motorcycle ridden by his grandmother was rammed by a lorry after coming out from the school while Nur Afizah died after being knocked down by a motorcycle before she was ran over by a car while crossing to her school.

The two deaths at the beginning of the new school term had prompted the state Education Department to review the safety of students crossing the roads near their schools, especially in busy areas.

Its director Datuk Mansor Lat acknowledged that it was paramount to improve the safety of students going to and leaving their school.

He said the department had begun identifying the schools concerned and had proposed the necessary measures to improve safety of crossings.

"We recommend installing traffic lights and improving the visibility of zebra crossings or yellow lines," he said.

Mansor said the proposal would be forwarded to the relevant government agencies for further action.

He also urged motorists to slow down when driving near school areas and advised students to be extra careful when crossing the road.

Meanwhile, state Education, Transportation and Public Works Committee chairman Datuk Tajul Urus Mat Zain said the state government was also conducting its own study to identify the cause of the two accidents to find ways to improve the safety of school crossings.

"We will investigate the two cases and if the tragedy was caused by poor lighting, we will install light poles in the area," he said.

Tajul Urus said he would discuss with the parties concerned whether to engage the services of the traffic wardens," he said.

Afizah became the first road fatality in her school while the previous victims before her were lucky to escape with non-life threatening injuries.

Her family and residents in Gunung Keriang claimed that the crossing was poorly lit and motorists plying the area could not see clearly from afar the students crossing the roads.

The improvement of safety at SMK Sri Gunong may come too late for Afizah, but it would help improve the safety of her twin-sister and their schoolmates.



Friday, February 7, 2014

2. Health Of Malaysian At Alarming Level

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 10 per cent of Malaysians were admitted to hospitals last year alone, underlining a serious concern over the state of the people's health.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya said statistics showed that three million patients were admitted in 2013, comprising 10 per cent of Malaysia's 29.9 million population. Government hospitals, he said, were the destinations of two thirds of these patients.

Dr Hilmi described the development as "alarming" and urged Malaysians to take their health seriously.

"This number is very alarming and Malaysians should start taking control of their health as the figures could rise if no preventive measures are taken."

Dr Hilmi said the government had allocated RM20 billion for healthcare in 2013 and had increased the amount to RM22 billion for this year to tackle the worrying increase in the number of hospital patients in the country.

"Being healthy would not only contribute to national development, but save the country a large sum of money on medical treatment," he said.

He said it would cost less for the government, if individuals adopted preventive practices instead of treating illnesses.

"Besides taking good care of ourselves, we should undergo medical check-ups to ascertain the state of our health."

Dr Hilmi was speaking after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Orion Healthcare Management Sdn Bhd and Angkatan Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia (Angkasa) here, yesterday.

Angkasa president Datuk Abdul Fattah Abdullah said the agreement would provide cheaper treatment and wider access to medication to 700 staff, with plans to expand the benefits to more than eight million Angkasa members soon.

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Saturday, February 8, 2014

3. 107 Dengue Hot Spots in Selangor

KUALA LUMPUR: HEALTH Ministry sent a firm warning to Selangor government to step up efforts to tackle the dengue outbreak as 107 out of 115 dengue locality hot spots in the country (93 per cent) were located in the state.

Its minister, Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam, said if the state government was not careful, it might be overrun by a dengue epidemic. This was because out of the 10,712 cases with 19 deaths recorded nationwide since the beginning of the year, 5,636 cases were in Selangor, with six deaths. This, he said, was an increase of 7,876 cases nationwide, or 227 per cent, for the same period last year when 2,836 cases were recorded.

"The state government needs to be more accountable towards the people as it involves public health.

"Dengue fever is an urban disease, especially in flats and apartments. It is common for a whole floor to be infected as it is easy for the Aedes mosquitoes to fly from one unit to the other, spreading

the virus quickly," he said during a visit to Mentari Court Apartment in Petaling Jaya, which has been a hot spot since June 17 last year.

Dr Subramaniam said maintenance was the main issue for these middle- and low-cost units as tenants rarely or never paid maintenance fee and the cracked floors, burst pipes and clogged drains were breeding grounds for the mosquitoes and larvae.

There were 107 dengue hot spots in Selangor -- Petaling (57 localities), Hulu Langat (43), Gombak (5), Hulu Selangor (1) and Klang (1); six localities in Seremban, Negri Sembilan, and two in Titiwangsa in Wilayah Persekutuan, Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Subramaniam said the number of dengue cases had reached a dangerous level in the country, which was causing the ministry grave concern. An action committee, chaired by Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, has been set up to combat the problem.

Dr Subramaniam said the ministry was applying multiple methods to control the Aedes mosquitoes and larvae, but the public should also cooperate by keeping their homes clean and clear stagnant water.

Health deputy director-general (public health) Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman said among the methods used to wipe out breeding grounds included biological control using a mist blower.

He said the machine, whose function is similar to fogging, would exude VectoBac WG (a biological insecticide for specific control of mosquito larvae) in both present and potential localities.

Clinics in major cities will be open until 10pm to accommodate the rising number of dengue patients.



Saturday, February 8, 2014

4. IWK: We're Sure We Didn't Pollute

NOT HARMFUL': CEO says murky water leaked from its treatment plant

INDAH Water Konsortium has stuck to its guns saying that its sewage treatment plant did not pollute Sungai Batu Ferringhi or the nearby beach.

Its chief executive officer, Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohammad Din, said the murky water that drained out into the river on Tuesday was not harmful.

Elaborating on the murky water, he said it was caused by a leakage in the treatment plant. The leakage was caused by a loose control valve.

He said the amount that leaked was 0.5 per cent of the total 7,500 cubic metres of sewage being treated by the plant at the time.

"The brown-coloured liquid had drained out through a pipe that was carrying treated effluents into the river.

"The liquid is not black or blackish as reported by the press, and that it is not harmful," he said when briefing Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, 30 officials, including several assemblymen, and 10 state executive councillors yesterday.

Kadir, who was calm and collected throughout the hour-long power- point briefing, said IWK took samples of the brown liquid for testing.

He said state Department of Environment (DoE) and state Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) had also taken samples.

Despite the explanation, no results of the water samples were produced.

On the loose valve, Kadir said IWK workers rectified the situation within 20 minutes. It became loose because of tide buoyancy in the aeration tank.

Except for the leakage on Tuesday, he said the treatment plant, manned by seven workers including an engineer, did not have any problems.

He said the plant also adhered strictly to sewage treatment plant standards set by DOE. He showed those present the effluent quality recorded by the plant for the past year, with the last reading recorded on Jan 17.

"The plant has always recorded better readings than the standards set by DOE, including for suspended solids and for bio-oxygen demand."

Kadir denied claims that black specs found in the sand at the beach originated from his plant.

On fears of E. coli (*Escherichia coli*), usually associated with human faeces that could have harmful effects on humans, Kadir said water samples had been sent for testing.

DoE and DID had also sent samples for testing of E. coli. The results were yet to be released, Kadir added.

He explained there were "good" and "bad" E. coli and that there was no need for anxiety unless the bacterial count in the river was higher than the permissible levels.

At this juncture, Pulau Tikus assemblyman Yap Soo Huey interjected and raised concerns that apart from E. coli, there could be presence of other dangerous bacteria.

A bio-technologist by profession, the first-time elected representative said the treatment plant, built in the 1980s, was outdated based on Kadir's earlier explanation.

Yap proposed for some upgrading works, including adding a retention tank for effluent that has been chlorinated to ensure the discharged liquid did not pose a risk to riverine life and humans.

Lim, who appeared baffled over the "apparent" pollution of Sungai Batu Ferringhi, showed a video taken by DID officers of dark-coloured effluent spewing from a pipe, originating from the treatment, into the river.

"The effluent gushing out from the pipe is very frightening. The discharge could have been for a short time but the river quickly turned dark."

He said the state government was not trying to find fault with any parties but to find the source of the pollution.

When Lim asked Kadir if IWK would clean up the river of pollution, Abdul Kadir said no and responded that instead the DID would do so.

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

5. We're No.3 For Health Services

BEST AND AFFORDABLE: Najib tweets his pride at country's achievement

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has been ranked as one of the top three destinations offering the best healthcare services by an international magazine publication.

United States-based publishing group, International Living, in its annual Global Retirement index ranked Malaysia at third place for countries which provide the best and most affordable care in the world after France and Uruguay.

In an immediate reaction to the report, Datuk Seri Najib Razak tweeted that Malaysia should be proud of the achievement.

"Malaysia scores third best out of 24 countries in International Living's Annual Global Retirement Index 2014. We should be proud!"

In the report, which was published by the magazine's website InternationalLiving.com, it stated that Malaysia has gained its fame as a medical-tourism destination and that medical experts in the country were equal to or better when compared to most Western countries.

InternationalLiving.com's Asia correspondent, Keith Hockton, said healthcare costs are so low and that patients could pay out of his or her pocket for many standard procedures

"A regular doctor's visit costs \$16 (RM53) and a dental check-up costs US\$9 (RM30)," he said in the report, which was published last week.

"At this time, foreigners cannot access the public healthcare system here, but the low cost of healthcare and range of health-insurance options, means that paying for healthcare is no hardship."

It was reported last month by the same magazine publication that Malaysia was ranked as the third spot for "The World's Best Places to Retire in 2014".

The report also described Malaysia as Asia's best retirement haven.

"Malaysia is the best place to retire in Asia right now, and there's no sign of that changing.

"A couple can live comfortably in a luxury ocean-view condo on US\$1,700 (RM5,672) a month including rent," the report said.

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Saturday, February 15, 2014

6. Dengue on the rise in the north

DENGUE cases in the northern states are on the rise, with Perlis recording a 74 per cent rise in the period Jan 1 until now from the same period last year.

Perlis Health Department director Datuk Dr Ghazali Othman said 33 cases were recorded between Jan 1 and Feb 8, compared with 19 cases reported in the same period last year.

Dr Ghazali said although no deaths were reported, the situation was still alarming as Perlis had seen an increasing trend in dengue cases in the last two years.

"We recorded 172 cases with one death in 2012. The number soared to 221 cases with one death last year, an increase of about 28.5 per cent.

"Among the dengue hotspots are Taman Hijrah and several other areas in Kuala Perlis," he said.

Dr Ghazali said gotong-royong was an effective way to clean up and rid residential areas of mosquito breeding grounds. However, he said, that should be done regularly instead of only after dengue had been reported in the area.

"They should be doing the cleaning up more often to ensure a healthier environment," he said.

Dr Ghazali said the department had distributed dengue prevention kits containing guidelines on how to prevent dengue.

On Tuesday, about 228 premises in Perlis, including houses, workshops, kindergartens, homestays and community halls, were inspected for mosquito breeding grounds "Op Gempur", an operation held simultaneously nationwide.

All the premises inspected were found to be free of mosquito breeding grounds.

In Kedah, two residents in Kampung Gunung Sali, Alor Star, were each issued a RM500 compound for harbouring mosquito breeding grounds in their homes during the same operation.

Department head of operation Dr Aishah Jusoh said 221 houses in the village were inspected in the joint operation with Alor Star City Council.

State Health Department director Dr Ismail Abu Taat said 106 dengue cases with one death were recorded in Kedah from Jan 1 to Feb 10.

This compares with 94 cases recorded in the same period last year.

He said the Kuala Muda district recorded a sharp increase, with 61 cases recorded from Jan 1 to Feb 10 compared with just 13 cases in the same period last year.

"Kota Setar recorded 13 dengue cases; Kulim, 10; Kubang Pasu, seven; Baling, seven; Padang Terap, four; Langkawi, three; and Pendang one," he said.

Ismail said the dengue situation in the state was under control despite the slight increase in the overall number of cases.

However, he urged the people to be proactive in destroying mosquito breeding spots within their neighbourhoods.

"The department officials have been tasked to monitor and identify Aedes breeding grounds in the state, but we need the cooperation of the public to curb this spread," he said.

A total of 817 dengue cases with four deaths were recorded in 2012. The number slightly decreased to 813 cases with one death last year.

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Monday, February 17, 2014

7. Heavier fines for MyKad loss

HUGE INCREASE: Govt mulls move to check people's negligence

BAGAN DATOH: THOSE who frequently lose their MyKad can find themselves being made to literally pay heavily for their error.

In a bid to cut the massive number of cases of missing MyKad yearly, the government is mulling to raise the fines which it hopes would serve as a deterrent to the problem.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the number of missing MyKad kept increasing annually, despite fines being imposed.

He said last year alone, 681,356 MyKad were reported missing.

Zahid described the situation as a "national threat" as many of these missing documents ended up in the hands of illegal immigrants.

"This is a national threat. These lost cards had been found on illegal foreigners during checks by enforcement agencies," he said.

This marked a huge increase in the number of missing MyKad annually. Last year, the Home Ministry had said that from 2010 to 2013, no less than 500,000 MyKad were reported missing.

Zahid said the situation could be avoided if Malaysians treated their documents with the necessary care.

"This is due to negligence and carelessness of MyKad holders who did not treat their identity documents with respect," he said.

He said certain laws were being studied to increase fines for misplacing MyKad, adding that the government might raise the fines if it felt that such a move could curb cases of missing documents.

"We don't want to end up being called heartless and cruel for raising the fines over lost Mykad."

Zahid also said more than one million Malaysians over the age of 18 had yet to apply for the My18 identity cards.

He said the figure for children aged 12 who had yet to apply for MyKad was more than 60,000.

The actual figures provided by the National Registration Department were 1,065,227 for My18 and 64,122 for My12.

"The figures are astoundingly high. Parents must be responsible to get their children the adult cards," he said after presenting My12 and My18 cards in his parliamentary constituency of Bagan Datoh here yesterday.

Also present were Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Mohamad Khalid Shariff and National Registration Department director-general Datuk Jariah Mohd Said.

Zahid said despite having provided mobile NRD services in various parts of the country, the response for My18 registration remained lukewarm.

He urged My18 card holders to replace their My12 cards as soon as possible, adding that holders can retain their My18 cards until they are 25 years old.

8. People with 'normal' fever urged to go to govt clinics

KUALA LUMPUR: Those who do not have critical illnesses are advised to seek treatment at government health clinics to avoid congestion at government hospitals.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said patients would be treated faster at the health clinics because of shorter queues there, as the emergency and trauma units in government hospitals were congested with patients who had contracted dengue.

He said apart from dengue cases, government hospitals prioritised critical and emergency cases, like accident victims and heart attack patients.

"With dengue on the rise, people with normal fever go to government hospitals.

"Based on reports that we have received, more than 30 per cent of patients who go to government hospitals at night seek treatment for normal fever."

He said this when asked to comment on a statement by deputy director-general of Health Datuk Dr S. Jeyaindran that more than 2.3 million patients had sought treatment at the emergency and trauma units in government hospitals in the first six months of last year.

Dr Jeyaindran had said based on a study, it was found that more than 70 per cent, or 1.6 million of the cases, were non-critical.

This results in patients with serious injuries or who are in critical condition having to compete with them for treatment.

Dr Subramaniam said those who had "normal" fever could seek treatment at health clinics even after office hours.

He said this was because the operating hours of health clinics in dengue hot spots nationwide had been extended until 10pm.

Earlier, he witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Malaysian Indian Football Association (Mifa) and Malaysian Indian Sports Council here.

Present were Deputy Youth and Sports Minister Datuk M. Saravanan and Mifa president Datuk T. Mohan. Bernama

9. Dengue cases among students on the rise

HIGHER RISK: 1,310 cases reported in the 13-to-17 age group as of Feb 8

KUALA LUMPUR: SOME 957 dengue cases involving pupils, aged between 7 and 12, had been reported until Feb 8 against 210 cases in the same period last year.

The Health Ministry's statistics also revealed a significant increase in cases involving students aged between 13 and 17, its deputy director-general (public health), Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman said, adding that the number was worrying.

A total of 1,310 cases involving the age group had been reported, compared with 348 cases in the same period last year.

"The students are at a higher risk of contracting dengue fever as they are exposed to Aedes mosquitoes when travelling to school and back home," Dr Lokman said yesterday.

"Aedes mosquitoes are most active early in the morning and late evening."

He noted that students were also exposed to Aedes mosquitoes when playing outdoors in the evening.

"The ministry is urging parents to ensure that their children use insect repellents when leaving home in the morning for school or playing outside in the evening."

He added that school bus or van operators should spray their vehicles with aerosol before students boarded them.

"Schools are also urged to do the same before lessons start in the morning to kill any adult mosquitoes."

He said the most effective way to rid of mosquito-breeding grounds was to ensure that there were no containers collecting water left in the school compound.

"Any ponds or flower pots should be dried or added with Abate to avoid the mosquitoes from breeding."

National Parent-Teacher Collaborative Council president Datuk Muhamad Ali Hasan said the rising number of cases involving students was a wake-up call for parents, teachers, students and the community to carry out activities to clear mosquito-breeding grounds

"There should be frequent health screenings in schools to detect any symptoms of dengue fever, as well as health talks."

National Union of the Teaching Profession president Hashim Adnan said precautionary measures were a must at this juncture.

"If one or more students from the same school are down with dengue fever, then the school (management) should be on alert."

The ministry reported 11,650 dengue cases from last month to Feb 8, compared with 2,098 cases in the same period last year.

Death toll had also doubled, with 19 so far against eight deaths in the same period last year.

Some 118 hot spots in states, including Selangor, Negri Sembilan and the federal administrative capital Putrajaya, had been identified

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

10. Officers advised against renewing Sg Muar sand miner's licence

SEGAMAT: Just a day before the Sungai Muar tragedy on Friday, a team of officers from various authorities, which assessed the river at Buloh Kasap, decided against renewing the licence of the company that was mining sand there.

The team found that the company had failed to meet several criteria, allegedly causing the river embankment to collapse.

Senior officers of the district and land office were non-committal on what the other criteria were. Answer to questions on whether the damage to the river bank could have occurred within a year of sand mining were also not forthcoming.

The company was first issued an annual licence to mine sand in the area 24 years ago.

The officers said a team from various departments including, the Drainage and Irrigation Department, would inspect the area before approving for the company to mine sand every year.

The Fisheries Department would also be roped in to check on the quality of the river, to ensure that aquatic life in the river was not affected. However, divers involved in the search of the bodies in the weekend reported zero visibility in the river.

The trip to the area was a follow-up to a January assessment (a procedure before licences are renewed) where the authorities found that the river bank was weak.

Segamat district officer Abdul Rahim Nin said his office's role was only to advise the Land Office, which was the issuing authority for sand mining licences.

"We advise the land office whether or not a license should be renewed. Based on our checks, we advised the land office against it."

The company's licence to mine sand in a 0.4-ha area in Sungai Muar's vicinity expired in December.

Yesterday, two excavators believed to have been used for sand mining at the river as well as a generator set near a makeshift cabin were still by the river.

Segamat Land Officer Muzaldin Mohamed said his office was preparing a report following the drowning.

The report will be submitted to the National Land Council , the Menteri Besar's Office and the state government.



Tuesday, February 25, 2014

11. PBS put in hold for fine-tuning

IMPROVEMENTS: Ministry-level review completed, says Muhyiddin

KAJANG: THE school-based assessment (PBS) policy was put on hold so that the Education Ministry could improve the system, said its minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Muhyiddin, who is also deputy prime minister, said the move was to resolve issues in the implementation of the policy and not to "ill-treat" teachers. He also refuted claims that he had issued a transfer order to a teacher who objected to the system.

"It is not true that teachers cannot voice out their opinions. However, we hope that this can be carried out through the proper channels so that action can be taken to rectify problems.

"PBS has been put on hold so that we can make some enhancements to fine-tune the policy."

He also said he had been informed that the review on PBS had been completed at the ministry level.

Education Minister II Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh said the ministry would introduce an improved PBS in April after considering feedback from teachers and its impact on students.

"PBS will not be scrapped but its implementation will be revised so as not to overburden teachers.

"There are no plans to scrap PBS because it is a holistic format of assessment to replace the exam-oriented system.

"However, its implementation needs tweaking, so, we will study the policy again carefully and make improvements," he said after attending a research exhibition at Universiti Malaya yesterday.

He said the system's implementations was put on hold after listening to the grouses of teachers, whose workload had increased because of the existing assessment format.

"It is not a knee-jerk reaction as we have studied the implementation for some time and found that many aspects need to be revised."

National Union of the Teaching Profession president Hashim Adnan called on the ministry to provide guidelines for teachers on the assessment method they need to adhere to following the temporary freeze on the system.

"The current textbooks and syllabi were designed according to the PBS policy.

"So, if it is put on hold, how do teachers now assess their students?

"The ministry must also immediately rectify the issues related to PBS so that they will not affect the students' academic performance."

National Parent-Teacher Collaborative Council president Datuk Muhamad Ali Hasan suggested a combination of PBS and exam-based evaluation.

"Rather than focusing 100 per cent on PBS, the ministry should consider dividing the ratio into 60 per cent for PBS and 40 per cent for exam-based assessment." Additional reporting by Aliza Shah

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

12. Sabah needs infusion of 600 medical officers

CRITICAL: Health Ministry hopes to employ doctors from peninsula

KOTA KINABALU: SABAH is facing a critical shortage of medical officers, with another 600 needed for hospitals and clinics.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said there were 700 doctors in the state, while existing posts for housemen and specialists had been filled.

However, he said, there was a shortage of medical officers and the ministry was considering options to employ more doctors from the peninsula to Sabah and Sarawak.

Speaking after making his rounds at the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital's twin tower blocks here yesterday, Dr Subramaniam said he would discuss the matter with the Public Service Department to facilitate the movement and review incentives to attract more medical officers to the two states.

Meanwhile, operations at the new RM365 million twin building blocks are expected to start in June.

"We are now bringing in equipment. This will cost RM120 million and there will be 931 beds in the two blocks," he said, adding that the state capital now had three government hospitals that housed 1,500 beds.

Dr Subramaniam said the ministry would look into establishing health development zones that include seven districts: Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Tawau, Beaufort, Sipitang, Keningau and Kota Marudu.

This is to ensure patients are given medical attention in their area, hence reducing the number of patients referred to Kota Kinabalu.

On the issue of foreigners having to bear full medical payment, Dr Subramaniam said the ruling would also include refugees.

"We will speak with the United Nations on how this will be done. In theory, anybody who is a foreigner has to pay, regardless of whether he is an expatriate, illegal immigrant or legal worker."

On whether there would be a system put in place to ensure foreigners would not cheat their way into hospitals, he said it would need co-operation from other ministries.

"I know the special situation (large presence of illegal immigrants) in Sabah, but the issue is beyond the Health Ministry.

"It will need the involvement of relevant ministries."

Independent economic macro-analyst Professor Dr Hoo Ke Ping said the government should have imposed the full medical fees 20 years ago when foreigners from neighbouring countries sought treatment.

"We have not taken any action on this and we have been generous. However, times are tough now given the financial condition.

"The Health Ministry has the third largest budget but there is no budget to build hospitals or enough beds.

"Ideally, employers should bear the cost for their foreign employee."

Now, by adding the medical to the employment, it could discourage them from hiring foreigners, who are weighing down the wage market with cheap labour," said Hoo.

Malaysian Medical Association president Datuk Dr N.K.S. Tharmaseelan said the decision was fair.

"Foreigners shouldn't complain as we charge only normal rates, never more.

"Malaysia is rated the third best healthcare provider in the world, which is appealing to foreigners.

"When we go overseas, we have to pay a premium sometimes and some don't allow foreigners to use their public facilities," Dr Tharmaseelan said.

The Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations chief executive officer Datuk Paul Selvaraj said healthcare for foreigners should be included in the cost of labour.

"Employers who bring their workers are going to benefit, so there is no reason why we should provide subsidies for foreigners."

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Friday, February 28, 2014

13. Display clear price tags in 6 months or face penalty

PUTRAJAYA: LOCAL traders and retailers have six months to display clear and correct price tags of their goods or risk facing action, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said.

Launched yesterday, the Price Tagging Compliance Operation will be carried out until July to prevent profiteering and ensure business operators act responsibly.

"The government remains committed to ensuring traders do not take advantage of the rising cost of goods to cheat consumers.

"We want businesses to prosper and profit, which will improve the country's image, but we will not tolerate any attempt by traders to profiteer by breaching business regulations," he said after conducting price checks at the Presint 8 market here yesterday.

Muhyiddin said the government would continue monitoring attempts by irresponsible businessmen to manipulate the cost of goods and services via anti-competitive activities, like monopolies and cartels.

He said the government had taken measures to control the prices of essential goods, such as RON95 petrol, diesel, wheat flour and cooking oil.

"We are the only government in the world to have extensive programmes to cater to the welfare of the people. Recently, the government set up a special committee to address the rising cost of living. No other government has done this," said Muhyiddin, who is also chairman of a special cabinet committee to address the rising cost of living.

Muhyiddin also launched the Pricing Guidelines for Retailers, which lists out traders' responsibilities and ways to correctly display price tags.

Present were Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Hasan Malek, his deputy Datuk Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah and Deputy Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Halimah Mohamed Sadique.

Muhyiddin said the correct display of price tags would benefit traders and consumers alike.

"Correct price tagging will allow consumers to easily make price comparisons before buying goods or services and, on the other hand, traders who display their price tags clearly will attract more customers."

Muhyiddin said the government found that the failure to display clear price tags was a factor for price hikes.

"During my surprise visits, I found some traders and retailers did not adhere to regulations and guidelines in displaying price tags."