

Improved health systems needed to tackle future health challenges, says PM

By Hana Naz Harun - August 15, 2022 @ 1:54pm



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob delivers his speech during the Health Policy Summit 2022 at World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.- NSTP/ASYRAF HAMZAH

KUALA LUMPUR: The Covid-19 pandemic has presented serious health challenges for the coming years, which must be tackled through improved and future-proof health systems.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri said the issue of an ageing population would pose a major challenge to the healthcare and social structure.

He said Malaysia was expected to be an ageing nation in 2030, when more than 15 per cent of the population would be aged 60 and above.

Disease prevalence rates and demand for healthcare, he said, would increase as the cost for healthcare for people aged 60 and over was estimated to cost two to three times more than that of a younger adult.

"The rate of non-communicable diseases has also increased, with every five adults in this country suffering from diabetes, and one in three adults from hypertension.

"Based on the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019, these numbers are worrying, because most do not realise that they have it, and subsequently risk death," he said at the Health Policy Summit 2022 here today.

Ismail Sabri said for example, 87 per cent of Covid-19 patients who died were those who suffered from at least one chronic disease, such as diabetes or hypertension.

Mental health problems were also on the rise, he said, with 2.3 per cent of adults experiencing depression, and 7.9 per cent of children aged between 5 and 15 experiencing mental health issues, adding that this number was expected to rise.

"The health challenges faced previously and what we expect in the future should be used as a basis to improve and strengthen the existing health system.

"Therefore, the Health White Paper is timely to realise a more resilient and future-proof health system."

He said after more than two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, a comprehensive and holistic plan must be built to ensure that the wellbeing of Keluarga Malaysia remained strong in the future.

The proposed Health White Paper, he added, was aimed at strengthening Malaysia's healthcare system, so that it would be in line with the people's health needs, apart from always being ready to face future obstacles.

"This White Paper not only focuses on the transformation of healthcare services, but also looks into other aspects that impact the health of Keluarga Malaysia.

"At the same time, the effectiveness of the country's health system should not be the responsibility of the Health Ministry alone, but should also be the duty of all parties such as stakeholders, public and private sectors, and non-governmental organisations.

"I believe that if we join hands and strive towards goodness, we can redesign health services for Keluarga Malaysia."

In his speech, Ismail Sabri also said he hoped the national healthcare system would support and help Keluarga Malaysia to stay healthy, and no longer focus on treatment and intervention after illness.

He said he also hoped the healthcare system could fulfill the treatment needs of Malaysians sustainably and resiliently, including in a global pandemic situation, and also for the country's healthcare system to be a source of pride for the nation.

"I believe that you also share the same hope and the transformation of the healthcare system must involve various aspects, which would also include practicing the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, where health is the responsibility of all.

"I also urge Keluarga Malaysia to practice healthy living, by making yourselves active, nurturing a healthy mind, eating healthily, not smoking, and going for regular health screenings," he added.