Health Ministry recommends masks as Malaysia's Covid-19 cases almost double to 13,000 in a week

An appeal has been made for all Malaysians to resume Covid-19 preventive measures after confirmed and reported cases had doubled in its latest report, just before the start of year-end holidays and festivities.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan urged the public to wear face masks when attending any gatherings or tourist attractions as the 49th Epidemiological Week (ME49) from Dec 3 to Dec 9 revealed a worrying surge, with 12,757 reported cases compared to 6,796 cases in ME48.

Radzi called for a greater sense of urgency and caution among Malaysians to take preventive measures, as an increase number of cases might soar up due to travel and gatherings.

Concerns have been raised about the strain on healthcare facilities, with a 1.4% increase in patient admittance for critical care and non-critical beds during ME49 compared to ME48.

The usage of intensive care unit (ICU) beds rose by 1.4%, and there was a 0.5% increase in Covid-19 patients requiring ventilators.

Radzi also provided an update on the emerging Omicron variant, confirming the detection of 26 new cases, with 21 classified as variants of concern (VOC) and the remaining as variants of interest (VOI).

Assuring the public, he stated that, as of today, no new variants have been identified.

Highlighting the predominant Omicron subvariants in Malaysia as XBB.1.16, XBB.1.5, and EG.5.5, Radzi clarified that while these variants are highly infectious, they generally do not result in severe cases.

To enhance protection for high-risk individuals, especially those aged 60 and above with comorbidities, obesity, compromised immune systems, or on medication for chronic diseases, he recommended consulting physicians regarding the use of Paxlovid.

This antiviral medication has shown effectiveness when taken within five days of symptom onset, providing an additional layer of defence for vulnerable populations.