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Unofficial Translation

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

VACCINATION PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AGED 5-11 YEARS

- Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has been monitoring the status of COVID-19 infection, especially in adolescents and children.
- From **25 January 2020 to 19 January 2022**, the total number of COVID-19 cases involving individuals under the age of 18 was 579,624 cases. Of the total, **269,773 cases involved children aged 5 to 11 years.**
- Although children usually experience only mild symptoms, several children experience severe symptoms and need treatment in hospitals, including in the intensive care unit (ICU).
- In total, **144 deaths were recorded as a result of COVID-19 infection among the population aged 18 years and below.** Of that number, **31 deaths involved children aged 5 to 11 years.**
- Recently, there has been an increase in COVID-19 infection among children, especially after the opening of schools in early 2022. Also, the new Omicron variant is more easily spread and has a high potential to infect children as well as adults.
- Data obtained from countries affected by the Omicron variant also show that there is an increase in hospital admissions among children.
- Apart from the risk of Long-COVID disease, children infected with COVID-19 are also at high risk of developing a serious effect known as Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C).
- **The occurrence of MIS-C can occur in one in 3200 children infected with COVID-19.** Some children can experience very severe symptoms such as **prolonged fever, low blood pressure, seizures, and inflammation of various organs including the heart (myocarditis), lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, intestinal tract, and others.**

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- Children category also has an indirect impact on social life, especially in terms of schooling and education. This in turn has a detrimental effect on the psychology as well as social development of the child as a whole.
- Looking at the need to protect the children population, the MOH through the Malaysian Drug Control Authority (DCA) has analyzed safety and efficacy data and agreed to grant conditional approval to **Comirnaty® 10mcg Concentrate for Dispersion Vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech)** on January 6, 2022, for the use of children aged 5 to 11 years.

This mRNA vaccine has undergone very rigorously and thorough clinical studies to ensure the quality, safety, and efficacy of the vaccine. The results of clinical studies of the vaccine showed the **effectiveness of 90.7%** as well as the ability to enhance a high immune response to COVID-19 disease.

- However, like other vaccines, the Comirnaty® vaccine specially formulated for children can also provide side effects that are commonly experienced by children such as pain at the injection site, redness, and swelling. Systemic reactions include fatigue, dizziness, muscle aches, chills, and fever. **Most of the side effects of this vaccine are mild to moderate and not long-lasting.**
- The COVID-19 vaccination program for children aged 5 to 11 years using the special formulation Comirnaty® vaccine has also been implemented in several countries including the United States, Canada, Israel, Australia, and Singapore. **Real World Data reported that the incidence of myocarditis or heart muscle inflammation after mRNA vaccination is very low.**
- **The United States of America** has implemented nearly 8.7 million doses of this vaccine using special formulations for children and preliminary data on Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI), has found that the incidence of AEFI is significantly lower than the incidence of AEFI among adolescents ages 12 to 17 years.
- Looking at the need to ensure the safety of children who will receive the COVID-19 vaccine, the MOH will constantly monitor the latest developments, especially the AEFI pattern at the global level.
- Currently, the COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for children aged 5 to 11 years. **However, the priority for vaccination at the beginning of the program is to children with health problems** because they are more at risk for severe COVID-19 disease including hospitalization, to the intensive care unit (ICU), and as well as death.

These health problems include:

- o Chronic respiratory diseases;
- o Cardiovascular disease;
- o Immunosuppression;
- o Diabetes;
- o Chronic kidney disease; and
- o Nerve diseases.

- For your information, **the COVID-19 Comirnaty® vaccine formulation that will be used in the vaccination program is a special formulation for children** and is supplied in a 10-dose vial (orange lid) and should be mixed with 1.3 mL of common saline solution. Each dose given is 0.2 mL and contains 10mcg of mRNA vaccine. **This dose is one-third of the dosage used in the adult dose.**
- This pediatric vaccination program **requires two injections of the vaccine dose with an interval of eight (8) weeks after the first dose.**
- Based on the latest data obtained, an interval of eight (8) weeks between two doses given **will affect the immune response and a higher rate of efficacy as well to provide longer protection.** In addition, these data also indicate that such time intervals can reduce the risk of myocarditis and have been recommended by health bodies around the world including the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.
- Based on the data, information, and views of the Technical Working Group (TWG) and the panel of authors of the Clinical Guidelines for COVID-19 Vaccination in Children, the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) will implement the COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to under 12 years **starting February 2022** as soon as the Pfizer Vaccine (children) arrives in Malaysia starting 31 January 2022.
- The launch of the vaccination program for children aged 5 to under 12 will be held on **3 February 2022 at Tunku Azizah Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.**
- **The appointment booking system through MySejahtera opens at the end of January 2022.** Therefore, parents can start registering their children as dependents in their MySejahtera application.
- **Vaccination appointment bookings for children** aged 5 to under 12 **will be opened in stages starting 31 January 2022** and open to parents living in the Klang Valley previously.
- Details on access to the appointment booking system will be announced in the coming days.

- **The COVID-19 Pediatric Immunization Special Task Force (CITF-C)** chaired by the Deputy Minister of Health 1, YB Dato 'Dr. Noor Azmi bin Ghazali held its first meeting on 19 January 2022.
- **CITF-C's** role is to formulate policies, coordinate operational strategies, identify what can be done as well as monitor the progress of the COVID-19 Childhood Immunization Program (PICKids).
- I would like to take this opportunity to request all employers to grant unrecorded leave to parents who bring their children for vaccination and also to make observations on the health of their children after vaccination.
- MOH targets 70% of children 5 to under 12 years old in the education system to be given 1 dose of Pfizer vaccine (children) within 2 months from the date the program is launched in early February 2022, and 80% will receive the full dose within 6 months of implementation.

ISSUE OF SALE OF FAKE VACCINATION CERTIFICATES

- The Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) has successfully tracked down and reported investigations on several premises of private medical practitioners allegedly involved in the sale of vaccination certificates.
- The results of the investigation and review by the MOH with the PDRM found that so far, all cases detected involved the implementation of paid vaccinations conducted by the private sector (Private Purchase Vaccination).
- As a prescribed procedure, all vaccination processes carried out by PICK and Private Purchase must be reported to the MOH through the MyVAS system for record and issuance of vaccination certificates. However, in these incidents, unfortunately, the private medical practitioner and those involved have provided false vaccination reports to the MOH.
- Currently, the investigation is still being carried out by the police and the MOH shall provide full cooperation.

STATUS OF TRAVEL PERFORMING UMRAH

- Yesterday, 19 January 2022, MOH together with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) held an engagement session with the Association of Travel Agencies (Umrah) to get feedback on the

direction or progress of the umrah industry following the temporary suspension decision.

- Among the issues raised by umrah tourism industry players at the discussion session this afternoon was SOPs related to the implementation of umrah travel, refund issues and flight rescheduling, insurance coverage, a timeline for reopening umrah travel, and the recovery assistance to the tourism industry.
- At the session, the Honorable Minister of MOTAC and myself expressed our commitment to refine and to focus on each issue and proposal that was submitted to all the respective ministry levels before presenting the detailed proposals to the next COVID-19 Ministerial Quartet Meeting.
- Among them include the screening process upon arrival at the KLIA International Gate, the implementation of quarantine either at quarantine stations or at homes, and also the role of Umrah travel agencies before, during, and after performing umrah.
- Specifically for the timeline for the reopening of umrah travel, **both ministries are committed to finalizing the risk assessment process and SOPs for umrah travel by mid-February this year.**
- MOH hopes that all industry players can give their full cooperation to ensure that umrah activities can continue to be carried out safely.

REDUCTION OF QUARANTINE PERIOD FOR TRAVELERS FROM ABROAD

- MOH has implemented segregation orders on travelers entering Malaysia from abroad including Malaysian citizens, permanent residents, expatriates or diplomatic corps, or any other foreigners authorized by the Director-General of Immigration.
- This order is enforced under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 [Act 342] to control the spread of COVID-19 infection.
- Based on data, science, and experience of other countries related to the management of the influx of travelers from abroad, the MOH has re-evaluated the period of surveillance and observation and decided on the latest ruling as follows:

o Travelers who have received a Booster Dose



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Quarantine period - 5 days

- Undergoing tests
 - RT-PCR COVID-19 two (2) days before departure with a negative result of COVID-19
 - RT-PCR COVID-19 on the day of arrival

- RT-PCR on day 4 OR RTK Ag supervised by health officer on day 5 negative

- Quarantine release
 - Quarantine release on day 5 if RT-PCR test on day 4 OR RTK Ag supervised by health officer on day 5 is negative

o No Booster Dose but COMPLETED VACCINE

- Quarantine period - 7 days
- Taking the Test:
 - COVID-19 RT-PCR was performed 2 days before departure with negative COVID-19 results
 - RT-PCR COVID-19 on the day of arrival
 - RT-PCR on the 5th day OR RTK Ag supervised by a health officer on the 7th day

- Quarantine Release:
 - Quarantine release on the 7th day if the RT-PCR OR RTK Ag test supervised by a health officer on the 7th day is negative

o NO / HAVE NOT received complete vaccination

- Quarantine period -10 days
- Taking the Test:
 - COVID-19 RT-PCR was performed 2 days before departure with negative COVID-19 results
 - RT-PCR COVID-19 on the day of arrival
 - RT-PCR on the 8th day OR RTK Ag supervised by a health officer on the 10th day

- Quarantine Release:
 - Quarantine release on the 10th day if the 8th day RT-PCR test OR RTK Ag supervised by the health officer on the 10th day is negative

measure to improve the work process at the international gateway (PMA), MOH also made the following decisions:

- o All travelers arriving from abroad will be given a digital HSO. So with that, travelers will no longer need to wear the surveillance bracelets (pink bracelets).
- o However travelers who arrive from high-risk countries and are allowed to undergo a quarantine order at their residence, will still be wearing the digital surveillance bracelets.

- The reduction of the quarantine period for travelers from abroad will take effect on **Monday, 24 January 2022**.
- Meanwhile, the MOH also agreed to remove the use of temperature scanners from the SOP. This proposal will be brought to the National Security Council (NSC) meeting for notification and update of the official National Recovery Plan SOP document.

EDUCATION CLUSTER SITUATION 2022

- From **Epid Week 1 of 2022 to 19 January 2022**, there were a total of **52 education clusters**, involving **30 clusters (57.7%) of secondary schools**. Out of the 30 secondary schools, **27 (90.0%) are boarding schools**.
- Schooling sessions have started on 9 January 2022 and 10 January 2022 according to certain states. This has **increased the risk of transmission of infection resulting in the number of clusters in schools in the first week of schooling which resulted in a total of 15 clusters**.
- In the **second week of schooling, the number of education clusters doubled to 33 clusters**. All states have reported clusters except Perlis, Terengganu, Sarawak and WP Labuan.
- For 52 Education clusters that have been reported since the first week of the year 2022, the investigation found that **44 clusters with index cases were students, 5 clusters of teachers or lecturers, and 3 more clusters from the education center support staff**.
- MOH has also instructed the Education Sector to emphasize:
 - o The importance of screening students, teachers, and staff before entering the

school/institution,

- RTK Ag testing on students, teachers, and staff according to the COVID-19 testing strategy.
 - To encourage parents to monitor the child's health status and be responsible for not sending the child to school if they have symptoms.
 - Conduct risk assessment of COVID-19 infection transmission in their respective institutions from time to time, so that preventive measures can be taken immediately.
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- MOH would also like to remind the District Health Officer, investigation and risk assessment should be conducted to assess the status of infection should there be any positive cases reported by schools or educational institutions,
 - In addition, cleaning and disinfection actions, as well as contact detection, should be carried out following the implementation of COVID-19 control and prevention activities.
 - MOH will hold discussions with the MOE and MOHE soon to strengthen control and prevention activities of COVID-19 infection in educational institutions.

KHAIRY JAMALUDDIN
Minister of Health Malaysia

20 January 2021



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