Malaysia

Situation summary

- As of 13 September 2020, there have been a total of 9915 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia, including 128 deaths.
- In the past seven days, 518 new cases have been reported, an increase of 722% compared to the previous week.
- Of the 518 cases reported in the past seven days, 36 (6.95%) were imported.
- On 9 September, the Ministry of Health (MOH) reported that 53% of cases among health-care workers involved transmission between colleagues in health-care settings. About 22% of health-care worker cases involved community transmission, while 17% involved infection during the management of COVID-19 patients.
- As of 7 September, the Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya regions have recorded the highest mortality rate in Malaysia (1.01 deaths per 100,000 population) followed by Perlis (0.78) and Negeri Sembilan (0.70).
- As of 10 September, the real-time reproductive number for COVID-19 in Malaysia is 1.78. The MOH reported that internal projections suggest that if the reproductive number remains at 1.60 for two weeks or more, there is a possibility that the number of infections will increase drastically.
- Of the 11 active clusters, five reported new cases in the past seven days:
  - Tawar cluster (Kedah): 91 total cases, and 14 new cases reported in the past seven days. The cluster has reported cases in Kedah, Penang and Perak.
  - Benteng Lahad Datu (LD) cluster (Sabah): 403 total cases. The cluster was first reported on 1 September at the Lahad Datu District Police Headquarters lock-up. The cluster reported an increase of 387 cases in the past week and accounts for 74.7% of the total new cases reported from 7 to 13 September.
  - Telaga cluster (Kedah): 16 total cases, with 7 new cases reported in the past seven days. The cluster was first reported on 30 August. Fourteen cases remain active and some involve health-care workers at the Sultanah Bahiyah Hospital.
  - Sungai cluster (Kedah): 57 total cases. The cluster was first reported on 7 September among health workers in a Kedah medical facility. The cluster reports three generations of cases in three states: Kedah, Penang and Perlis.
  - Laut cluster (Sabah): 4 total cases. The cluster was first reported on 12 September among illegal migrant populations in Kunak, Sabah.

Upcoming events and priorities

- The Immigration Department has outlined the latest guidelines for Malaysians who wish to exit and enter the country during the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) period.
- The government has expressed that it is unlikely to opt for selective border reopening to help revive the Malaysian tourism industry. The Immigration Department has released a list of countries whereby its citizens are barred from entering Malaysia.
The MOH will continue to monitor the implementation of the Periodic Commuting Arrangement (PCA) with Singapore. Authorities will re-evaluate its implementation and risk of infection from time to time.

The MOH continues to monitor closely the COVID-19 situation in Malaysia as well as other countries. Infection control at international gates has been enhanced.

On 9 September, the Prime Minister pledged that Malaysia will have access to a COVID-19 vaccine. Malaysia is in discussions with countries that are developing a vaccine and have offered its assistance to these countries.

Following the rapid rise of cases in the Sungai cluster, the government has imposed an administrative Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) in Kota Setar, Kedah from 11 to 25 September. Authorities have stated that the screening results for 366,787 residents under EMCO are expected to take seven days.

The EMCO for Kenanga and Mawar ended on 13 September. Both regions are within Amanjaya, Kedah. Additionally, the EMCO directive for the Melur zone has been extended to 27 September.

Following the rise in cases in the Benteng LD cluster, the Tawau Prison has been placed under EMCO from 11 to 25 September 2020. The lockdown will affect only the prisoners, prison staff and family members who live in the prison area.

Police officials have vowed to step up the enforcement of standard operating procedures (SOPs) to curb the spread of COVID-19 across the country.

The MOH has reported that pulmonary fibrosis as a COVID-19 complication has not been found among patients in Malaysia. Additionally, blood clots in the retinal artery have not been found in Malaysian cases.

The MOH is researching the antibody response in COVID-19 patients in Malaysia. Authorities note that a low antibody response may result in patients contracting SARS-CoV-2 again following recovery.

Authorities are studying the need to impose mandatory quarantine for those who have travelled from Peninsular Malaysia to Sabah and back for the state elections on 26 September.

National transmission assessment

At the national level, Malaysia remains in Stage 2, localized community transmission. Case numbers have jumped from a total of 63 cases in the previous week to 518 cases in the past week. Furthermore, of the total reported cases in the past seven days, about 93% were locally transmitted. Two major areas are being closely monitored and active response undertaken. The first area is the northern state of Kedah, including the Tawar (92 cases) and Sungai (57 cases) clusters, where the number of cases continues to grow. Enhanced Movement Control Order is now enforced in the affected area. The second area is in the state of Sabah, where cases were first detected in a police lock-up in early September. The Benteng LD cluster has grown to 403 cases and involves a police headquarters in Lahad Datu and a prison in the neighbouring district of Tawau. While these are mostly closed populations, there have been cases of transmission in the local communities arising from this cluster. It is noted that these areas in Sabah have a relatively high proportion of migrant populations. The recent spike in the number of reported cases is due to aggressive testing within these locations.
Malaysia
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report
Weekly report for the week ending 13 September 2020

Epi Update
COVID-19
Data reported for epi week ending 13 September 2020 (% difference compared to the previous 7 days)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>ICU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64,700</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests in the past 7 days (+1.2%)</td>
<td>New cases in the past 7 days (+722.2%)</td>
<td>Deaths in the past 7 days (-)</td>
<td>ICU utilization rate (+50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,372,154</td>
<td>9,915</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative tests</td>
<td>Cumulative cases</td>
<td>Cumulative deaths</td>
<td>ICU beds for COVID-19 patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.72%</td>
<td>Positivity rate</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>Case fatality rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imported cases and clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imported cases</th>
<th>Cases in the past 7 days with no link</th>
<th>Active clusters</th>
<th>Active clusters with more than three generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36 (6.9%)</td>
<td>15 (2.9%)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imported cases in the past 7 days</td>
<td>Cases in the past 7 days with no link</td>
<td>Active clusters</td>
<td>Active clusters with more than three generations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Epidemiology

Fig 1. Daily reported COVID-19 cases and Movement Control Order measures, Malaysia, as of 13 September 2020
Geographical distribution

- The states with active cases as of 13 September are Kedah (89), Sabah (415), Pahang (1), Penang (2), and Selangor (3). This state-level reporting is on a rolling 14-day basis, from 31 August to 13 September 2020, and excludes imported cases.

Clusters

- Of the 107 clusters identified in Malaysia, 11 are currently active. Two (2) new clusters were identified in the last week. These were:
  - **Sungai cluster**: The cluster was first reported on 7 September in Kedah. The index case (#9455) is a health-care worker at a medical centre in the state. She reported being unwell from 30 August but had not sought treatment. She tested positive for the virus on 5 September. The second case (#9456) is also a health-care worker and was a close contact of the index case. As of 13 September, a total of 57 cases have been linked to the cluster, and 14,044 individuals have been screened across Kedah, Penang and Perlis. A total of 711 health-care workers were screened, and 20 cases (2.8%) were detected among them.
  - **Laut cluster**: The cluster was first reported on 12 September in Kunak, Sabah. The index case (#9859) is a detainee at the Tawau Temporary Detention Centre. He was repatriated to Zamboanga, Philippines on 27 August 2020. However, he re-entered Sabah on 5 September to visit his wife illegally. His wife (#9860) tested positive on 8 September during the referral screening from Kunak Hospital to Tawau Hospital for further treatment of post-partum bleeding complications. The index case first developed symptoms on 6 September. As of 12 September, two additional cases have been detected through close contact screening: the index case’s child (#9861) and his neighbour (#9862). A total of 53 individuals, including the four cases, have been screened. All those screened are Filipino nationals.

- As of 13 September, a total of 4,666 individuals have been screened in association with the Benteng LD cluster. A total of 1,258 individuals were screened in Lahad Datu, and 3,408 contacts were screened in Tawau. Among the 913 prisoners who were screened, 383 (41.9%) tested positive for COVID-19. A total of 623 prison staff were screened; two cases were confirmed among them. A total of 1,214 close contacts of family members of staff and prisoners were screened; three contacts tested positive. A total of 1,699 (36.41%) front-line workers were screened; two tested positive for COVID-19. Of the 403 confirmed cases linked to this cluster, a total of 176 cases were detected among Malaysian citizens. Non-Malaysian cases were Filipino (152) and Indonesian (75) nationals.

- The Tawar cluster has reported a total of 18,233 individuals screened as of 13 September across Kedah, Penang and Perak. Of those screened, a total of 649 (3.56%) were health-care workers, with 624 (96.15%) from the private sector and 25 (3.85%) from the public sector. A total of six cases have been detected among health-care workers linked to this cluster.

- In the past seven days, five clusters have been declared closed. These are the Kurau, Meranti, Muda, PUI Sivagangga and DTI Bukit Jali clusters.

Strategic approach

Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI)

- The Immigration Department has released a list of countries whose citizens are barred from entering Malaysia from 7 September. The 23 countries include the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Russian Federation and India. Malaysian citizens disembarking from these countries will not be affected. Expatriates and professional visit pass-holders from the specified countries may enter, subject to approval from the Immigration Department.

- The MOH has released a risk-evaluation matrix to measure the risk of imported cases from other countries into Malaysia. The matrix consists of six core criteria for (a) number of COVID-19 cases in the past 14 days, (b) incidence rate per 1 million population in the past 14 days, (c) death rate per
1 million population in the past 14 days, (d) recovery index, and (e) if the country reports cumulative cases beyond 150 000. Data for this evaluation are obtained from a variety of sources, including the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and Our World in Data.

- School co-curricular and sporting activities are permitted so long as participants adhere to the Education Ministry’s SOPs.
- The MOH has clarified that under the PCA between Malaysia and Singapore, Malaysian travellers (citizens and permanent residents) from Singapore who live in Johor may undergo home quarantine at their residences. While travellers living outside Johor must undergo their quarantine at government-designated stations. Singaporean travellers (citizens and permanent residents) who return to work in Johor can quarantine at residences provided by their employers. Those working outside Johor will have to be quarantined in government-designated quarantine stations. Individuals under this scheme are exempt from undergoing the 14-day mandatory quarantine. However, they must remain quarantined while waiting for test results conducted within 24 hours upon entry into Malaysia.
- Following the rise in cases in Kedah, the government has imposed an administrative EMCO in the Kota Setar district of Kedah. The move will affect an estimated 366 787 people across 28 townships. The international entry point at Bukit Kayu Hitam will be shut down for the duration of the EMCO.
- The Johor state government has submitted working papers and SOPs to the Foreign Affairs Ministry to expedite the reopening of the Malaysia–Singapore border. Johor is capable of conducting more than 2000 COVID-19 tests per day.
- Sarawak has appealed to the federal government to allow the entry of some Indonesian citizens into the state for work.
- Effective 11 September, all food outlets and convenience stores will be allowed to operate until 2 AM. Similarly, foreigners are now allowed to pray in mosques.
- Following the rapid rise in cases in the Benteng LD cluster, Sabah will now segregate foreign detainees from Malaysian detainees.

**Surveillance and testing**

- From 3 April to 9 September, a total of 119 268 travellers entered Malaysia. Of those, 995 individuals tested positive for COVID-19. A total of 742 (74.57%) cases were detected during arrival screening, while 253 cases were detected from screening on the 13th day of quarantine.
- The Sarawak Disaster Management Committee (SDMC) has stated that a total of 28 546 samples were collected for RT-PCR tests in August 2020. This is equivalent to 920 samples per day. From these tests, 21 (0.07%) new cases were identified. During the same period, a total of 16 245 visitors entered Sarawak and 14 (0.09%) tested positive. Sarawak has also screened 2203 individuals referred from various enforcement agencies to government health facilities. Of those, only one (0.05%) case was detected.
- As of 9 September, in Sarawak alone, a total of 120 407 samples from 95 133 individuals had been taken for RT-PCR screening. From this, authorities have identified 700 cases. Of the 95 133 individuals screened, 30.2% of them were visitors from outside Sarawak, 18.4% were contacts of positive cases, 7.9% were health-care workers, and the remainder were from various monitoring and surveillance activities.
- The SDMC has decided that all occupants of immigration detention depots in Sarawak must undergo another round of COVID-19 screening. The number of detainees screened will be an estimated 690 people across two detention centres.

**Health-care capacity**

- The MOH is increasing preparedness for the next COVID-19 wave. The number of public hospitals that conduct screening has been increased from 26 to 120. Hospitals that treat COVID-19 patients have also been increased from 26 to 40. The number of hospital beds designated for COVID-19 patients is sufficient. The MOH training institutes may be used as low-risk COVID-19 treatment centres if more beds are needed.
- The MOH has implemented staff mobilization strategies to supplement staff at necessary hospitals.
• Laboratory capacity has been increased from 15 to 58 laboratories, including private and university laboratories.
• Personal protective equipment (PPE) sets have been increased and are now in adequate supply for at least two months.
• Malaysia has a sufficient supply of ventilators (1364 units) for the whole country.
• COVID-19 testing with Rapid Test Kit (RTK) Antigen at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and KIA2 has been conducted from 6 May onwards. Presently, there are a total of nine units of biological safety cabinets at KLIA and KIA2 to facilitate and accelerate COVID-19 testing at borders.

Risk communication and community engagement

• Following an emergence of cases among health-care workers in the Benteng LD, Tawar and Sungai clusters, the MOH, Prime Minister and Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) have reminded all front-line health-care workers to remain vigilant and comply with SOPs. The government has cited failure in practising physical distancing as the most common offence committed during the RMCO. Other offences include establishments failing to record customer contact tracing information, individuals not wearing face masks and individuals defying quarantine orders.
• The MOH has implemented an initiative to empower communities to protect themselves from COVID-19 infection. The initiative uses an approach called “Prevent and Educate, Charity, Obey, and Monitor” (CAPP). This approach falls under the Empowering Community Responsibility outlined during the RMCO. CAPP intends to maintain the green zone designation (areas with no active community-transmitted COVID-19 cases) for areas with no cases. Additionally, the programme aims to change area designations from yellow (areas reporting 1 to 40 COVID-19 cases) to green within 14 days. The initiative aims to bolster community responsibility and highlights the public’s role as a front line to protect themselves, family, and the local community from COVID-19 transmission.