

# MMA: Easing SOPs another positive step towards endemicity

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*Members of the public are seen wearing face masks in Kuala Lumpur. – Bernama photo*

BINTULU (April 29): Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) views the relaxation of Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) as another positive development in the management of the pandemic and another step closer to endemicity.

“We cannot be in a state of perpetuity as far as the SOPs are concerned.

“Overall, we view the relaxed SOPs as a practical step, especially in this phase of the pandemic where more normalcy will help revive our economy as well as relieve the mental stress that has accompanied us since the beginning of the pandemic,” said its president Dr Koh Kar Chai in response to Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin’s announcement on revised SOPs and protocols Wednesday.

He said relaxing testing requirements for travelers entering the country is an accepted practice for many countries that have opened their borders under significantly improved control globally especially in countries with high vaccination rates.

“We are concerned about doing away with travel insurance at this current moment when we do not know if the full reopening of borders will lead to an increased load on our healthcare services should there be an increase in cases albeit mild ones,” he said.

He added that maintaining travel insurance would take the load off the public healthcare system should the unthinkable arise.

Koh said wearing of face masks still has a role to play especially when in doors or on public transport.

“Though there is some flexibility on face mask wearing when outdoors, we hope the public will make the right call on when it is appropriate to put on facemasks,” he said.

He cautioned that many children are still unvaccinated while older adults and those with comorbidities can still be at risk of severe Covid-19.

“We also welcome the Health Ministry’s decision to remove checking in with MySejahtera app to enter premises as contact tracing is no longer necessary at this stage when the virus is already circulating in the community,” he said.

He pointed out that protocols set for Raya celebrations are also well thought out and comprehensive.

“We hope those celebrating will still prioritise safety when they visit their loved ones. It is always better to be safe than sorry,” he said.

He believed that a simple self-test before heading back to the hometown can be a lifesaver.

Koh said the relaxation of SOPs is not because the country is out of the pandemic but because people need to live with the virus and advised the public not to let their guards down yet.