

MMA: Relaxation of SOP a step closer to endemicity

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People scanning the QR code via MySejahtera at a mall in Bukit Bintang. - NSTP/ASWADI ALIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said the relaxation of the standard operating procedures (SOP), including lifting mask mandates for outdoors, was another positive development in the management of the pandemic.

MMA president Dr Koh Kar Chai said the move was also another step closer to endemicity for the country.

He said the association viewed the relaxed SOP 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.

"We cannot be in a state of perpetuity as far the SOP are concerned," he said in an immediate response to Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin's announcement on SOP relaxations.

Earlier, Khairy had announced that face masks were no longer mandatory outdoors from May 1, as were MySejahtera check-ins.

He had also announced that all social and economic activities will be allowed starting May 15.

Dr Koh said wearing of face masks still has a role to play particularly when indoors or on public transport, hence, MMA hopes the public will make the right call on when it is appropriate to wear their face masks.

"Bear in mind that many children are still yet to be vaccinated, 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 drop the requirement to scan the MySejahtera application before entering premises as there is no longer a need for the app for the purpose of contact tracing at this stage, where the virus is already circulating in the community," he said.

While saying the relaxation for testing requirements for travellers entering the country is an accepted practice, Dr Koh however expressed concern about doing away with the travel insurance.

"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.

"Maintaining the need for travel insurance will take the load off the public healthcare system should the unthinkable arise," he explained.

He also reminded those heading back to hometowns for Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations to do self-tests before their departure, stressing that this could be a "lifesaver".

"We hope those celebrating will still prioritise safety when they visit their loved ones. It is always better to be safe than sorry. A simple self-test before heading back to the hometown can be a lifesaver.

"A reminder that this relaxation of SOP is not because we are out of the pandemic, but because we need to live with the virus in our midst; and we must not let our guard down as yet."