

MMA: Travel insurance can help public healthcare system



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by **ASILA JALIL** / pic by **TMR FILE**

THE Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is concerned with the government's move to do away with travel insurance at the moment as the full reopening of borders may lead to an increase in cases.

MMA president Dr Koh Kar Chai said the association welcomes the eased Covid-19 restrictions announced by Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin on Wednesday and viewed it as another positive development in the pandemic management.

The relaxed standard operating procedures (SOPs) are deemed to be a practical step especially when normalcy at the current juncture will help revive the economy and relieve the mental stress that many have suffered throughout the period, he said.

“The relaxation for testing requirements for travellers entering the country is an accepted practice for many countries that have opened their borders to travellers in this stage where the pandemic is under significant control globally especially in countries with high vaccination rates,” he said in a recent statement.

However, MMA was concerned about the doing away of travel insurance at this moment as it is not known if the full reopening of borders could lead to an increased load on the country's 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,” Dr Koh added.

Despite the new mask mandate, he hoped the public will make the right call on when it is appropriate to wear face masks given that many children have yet to be vaccinated while older adults with comorbidities can still be at risk of severe Covid-19.

Meanwhile, the association lauded the government’s call to eliminate the requirement for MySejahtera check-ins noting 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 communities.

“The protocols set for the 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. A simple self test before heading back to the hometown can be a lifesaver.

“A reminder that this relaxation of SOPs 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,” he added.

Khairy announced nine new Covid-19 measures on Wednesday which will take effect on May 1, including the face masks exemption outdoors as the infectivity rate is low in an open area.

The government also dropped several other restrictions including physical distancing and shorter isolation period for Covid-19 patients.

Covid-19 patients can be released from isolation if they test negative on the fourth day.

Under the current safety guidelines, infected individuals are required to undergo self-isolation for seven days from the day they tested positive.