

AKHBAR : THE STAR  
MUKA SURAT : 6  
RUANGAN : NATION

THE STAR M/S 6 NATION 30/11/2024 (SABTU)

# Blame it on rising medical costs

'Premiums adjusted to ensure sustainability of insurance plans, say insurance groups

PETALING JAYA: Medical premiums will "typically" be adjusted every three years to ensure the sustainability of such insurance plans, say industry associations.

The accumulated impact of inflation has resulted in upward premium adjustments, said the Life Insurance Association of Malaysia (LIAM), Malaysian Takaful Association (MTA) and General Insurance Association of Malaysia (PIAM).

They said the insurance and takaful industry went through an "unprecedented" cumulative medical claims cost inflation rate of 56% in the 2021 to 2023 period.

"This surge, driven by various factors such as the rising costs of medical treatments, advanced healthcare technologies, and increased utilisation of health-care services, has made premium

repricing an unavoidable measure."

"Beyond inflation, the repricing quantum are also affected by factors such as individual risk rating, risk pooling, product benefits and features as well as expected claims," they said.

*The Star* has received letters from readers who spoke of their predicament.

"I recently received a letter from my insurance company stating that my medical insurance premium would increase from RM540 per month to RM2,030 per month," said one reader in September.

"The reasons cited were the significant increase in the cost of medical treatments and my attaining the age of 65."

On Wednesday, Bayan Baru MP Sim Sze Tzin gave a press confer-

ence, saying that MPs have received dozens of complaints about rising health insurance premiums.

In a joint statement to address concerns on medical premium increases, LIAM, MTA and PIAM said: "We understand that these adjustments may cause concern and we are committed to providing transparency and support during this time."

Besides rising costs of medical treatment and increased utilisation of healthcare services, they cited factors that led to rising premiums such as a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes which require long-term care, and an ageing population that leads to higher demand for medical care due to illnesses.

To address the difficulties faced

by policy holders, the three groups said they would be committed to stagger repricing adjustments to manage impact on customers.

Other measures include offering flexible premium payment plans to affected policyholders, and options for different protection plans at comparatively lower or the same premium.

"We welcome the recent announcement by the Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia on establishing a cost containment unit to manage healthcare costs, which will ensure services remain affordable while maintaining high standards of care," they said.

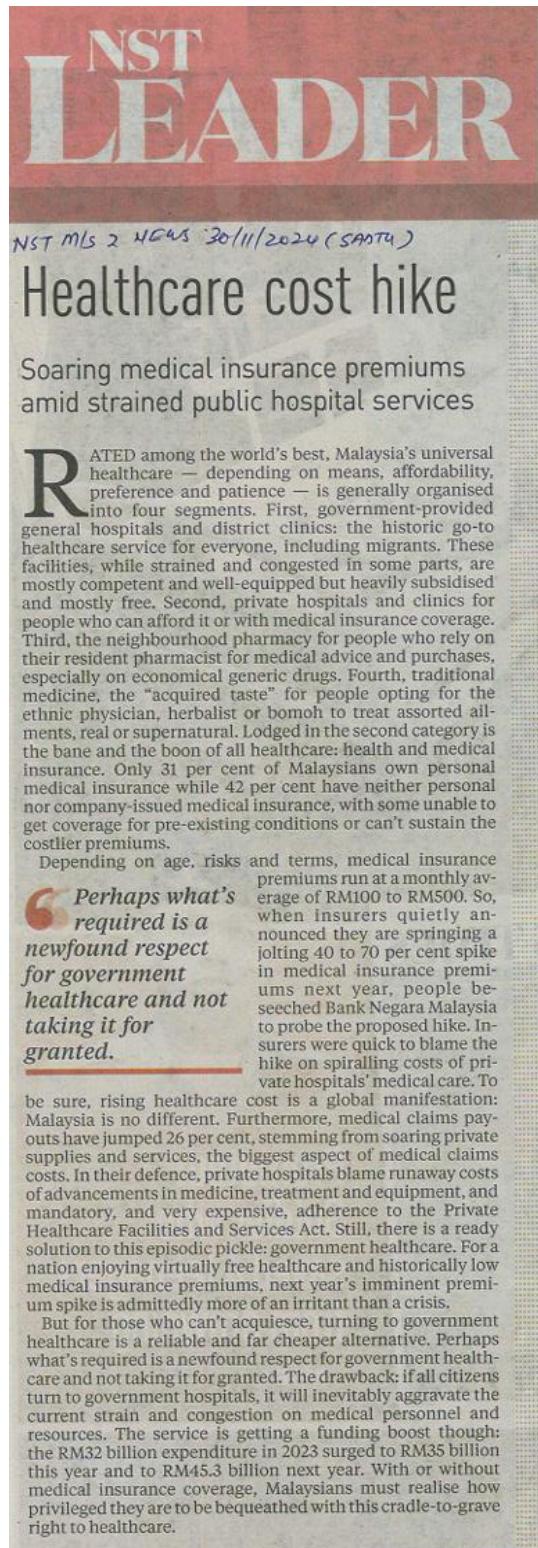
The groups also noted that the introduction of co-payment options in September was a long-term solution to help policyholders.

"Co-payment aims to reduce premiums by sharing medical costs with policyholders, encouraging more mindful healthcare usage in the long term," they added.

On Thursday, Bank Negara issued a statement, calling on insurers and takaful operators to review their repricing strategies for a more reasonable implementation.

They should offer viable options for policy owners/takaful participants who are significantly impacted by the higher premiums or contributions to continue having insurance or takaful coverage, the central bank said.

"Bank Negara remains committed to ensuring that the public continues to have access to suitable insurance and takaful products," it added.

**AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES****MUKA SURAT : 2****RUANGAN : NST LEADER**

The image shows the front page of the **NST LEADER** newspaper. At the top, it says "NST M/S 2 NEWS 30/11/2024 (SABTU)". The main headline is "Healthcare cost hike". Below the headline is a sub-headline: "Soaring medical insurance premiums amid strained public hospital services". The main article begins with a large paragraph starting with "RATED among the world's best, Malaysia's universal healthcare — depending on means, affordability, preference and patience — is generally organised into four segments. First, government-provided general hospitals and district clinics: the historic go-to healthcare service for everyone, including migrants. These facilities, while strained and congested in some parts, are mostly competent and well-equipped but heavily subsidised and mostly free. Second, private hospitals and clinics for people who can afford it or with medical insurance coverage. Third, the neighbourhood pharmacy for people who rely on their resident pharmacist for medical advice and purchases, especially on economical generic drugs. Fourth, traditional medicine, the "acquired taste" for people opting for the ethnic physician, herbalist or bomoh to treat assorted ailments, real or supernatural. Lodged in the second category is the bane and the boon of all healthcare: health and medical insurance. Only 31 per cent of Malaysians own personal medical insurance while 42 per cent have neither personal nor company-issued medical insurance, with some unable to get coverage for pre-existing conditions or can't sustain the costlier premiums." A smaller column on the right discusses the spike in medical insurance premiums, mentioning a 40 to 70 per cent spike and the role of private hospitals. A sidebar on the left contains a quote: "Perhaps what's required is a newfound respect for government healthcare and not taking it for granted." The quote is attributed to a red circular icon.

**RATED** among the world's best, Malaysia's universal healthcare — depending on means, affordability, preference and patience — is generally organised into four segments. First, government-provided general hospitals and district clinics: the historic go-to healthcare service for everyone, including migrants. These facilities, while strained and congested in some parts, are mostly competent and well-equipped but heavily subsidised and mostly free. Second, private hospitals and clinics for people who can afford it or with medical insurance coverage. Third, the neighbourhood pharmacy for people who rely on their resident pharmacist for medical advice and purchases, especially on economical generic drugs. Fourth, traditional medicine, the "acquired taste" for people opting for the ethnic physician, herbalist or bomoh to treat assorted ailments, real or supernatural. Lodged in the second category is the bane and the boon of all healthcare: health and medical insurance. Only 31 per cent of Malaysians own personal medical insurance while 42 per cent have neither personal nor company-issued medical insurance, with some unable to get coverage for pre-existing conditions or can't sustain the costlier premiums.

Depending on age, risks and terms, medical insurance premiums run at a monthly average of RM100 to RM500. So, when insurers quietly announced they are springing a jolting 40 to 70 per cent spike in medical insurance premiums next year, people besieged Bank Negara Malaysia to probe the proposed hike. Insurers were quick to blame the hike on spiralling costs of private hospitals' medical care. To be sure, rising healthcare cost is a global manifestation: Malaysia is no different. Furthermore, medical claims payouts have jumped 26 per cent, stemming from soaring private supplies and services, the biggest aspect of medical claims costs. In their defence, private hospitals blame runaway costs of advancements in medicine, treatment and equipment, and mandatory, and very expensive, adherence to the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act. Still, there is a ready solution to this episodic pickle: government healthcare. For a nation enjoying virtually free healthcare and historically low medical insurance premiums, next year's imminent premium spike is admittedly more of an irritant than a crisis.

But for those who can't acquiesce, turning to government healthcare is a reliable and far cheaper alternative. Perhaps what's required is a newfound respect for government healthcare and not taking it for granted. The drawback: if all citizens turn to government hospitals, it will inevitably aggravate the current strain and congestion on medical personnel and resources. The service is getting a funding boost though: the RM32 billion expenditure in 2023 surged to RM35 billion this year and to RM45.3 billion next year. With or without medical insurance coverage, Malaysians must realise how privileged they are to be bequeathed with this cradle-to-grave right to healthcare.

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA  
MUKA SURAT : 33  
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

UTUSAN MALAYSIA M 33 D: NEGERI 20/11/2024 (SABTU)

# Malaysia berisiko tinggi dijangkiti virus H5N1

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**PETALING JAYA:** Walaupun kadar jangkitan dilaporkan masih rendah di seluruh dunia, Malaysia berisiko tinggi dijangkiti virus selessema burung H5N1.

Pensyarah Kanan Pusat penyelidikan dan Pendidikan Penyakit Berjangkit Tropika, Universiti Malaya (UM) Dr. Zubaidah Ya'cob berkata, ia berikutan kedudukan geografi Malaysia yang strategik dan menjadi laluan burung untuk bermigrasi dari beberapa negara termasuk Siberia, China, Mongolia, dan Korea sebelum menuju ke Asia Tenggara termasuk Malaysia.

Katanya, jangkitan manusia lazimnya berlaku melalui sentuhan langsung dengan burung yang dijangkiti atau persekitaran tercemar.

"Ia boleh tersebar kepada manusia melalui kontak langsung dengan unggas yang dijangkiti, najis burung, atau bahan yang tercemar oleh virus tersebut. Walaupun jangkitan pada manusia jarang berlaku, ia boleh menyebabkan penyakit yang serius, bahkan kematian.

"Justeru beberapa langkah pemantauan perlu dilaksanakan terutama di kawasan ladang ternakan ayam, itik dan kawasan tumpuan burung liar. Malah dalam konteks Malaysia, strain seperti H5N1 dan H7N9 dikesan sebagai ancaman utama," katanya kepada *Utusan Malaysia* semalam.

Sebagai rekod selessema burung atau influenza adalah penyakit zoonotik yang disebabkan virus influenza A yang menyerang burung dan mamalia.

Terbaharu, Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) menggesa negara di seluruh dunia untuk

meningkatkan pemantauan bagi selessema burung selepas kes pertama dikesan pada seorang kanak-kanak di Amerika Syari-kat (AS).

Menurut Pengarah Kesedi-an dan Pencegahan Epidemik serta Pandemik WHO, Maria Van Kerkhove, jumlah jangkitan selessema burung H5N1 yang dikesan dalam manusia di seluruh dunia meningkat sejak beberapa tahun lalu.

Dalam pada itu, Dr. Zubaidah mengulas mengenai pencemaran susu di California berkata, Malaysia tidak terlepas daripada berdepan masalah sama.

Justeru beliau menggesa syarikat makanan terutama pengeluar susu di negara ini melaksanakan ujian pengesan-an patogen secara berkala sekiranya terdapat laporan jangkitan zoomotik.

"Antaranya, ujian mikrobiologi untuk mengesan kehadiran

bakteria seperti Escherichia coli, Salmonella dan Listeria. Ujian pengesan kehadiran virus influenzera termasuk selessema burung (avian influenza) mungkin dilakukan dalam situasi tertentu yang memerlukan perhatian khas, seperti semasa wabak atau apabila terdapat risiko pence-maran silang melalui sumber air, makanan ternakan, atau hubungan dengan burung yang dijangkiti," jelasnya.

Menurutnya, walaupun susu diproses menggunakan Ultra-High Temperature (UHT) umumnya dianggap selamat jangkitan patogen zoonotik, ia tetap berisiko dalam situasi tertentu.

"Risiko pencemaran selepas proses UHT boleh berlaku jika pengendalian yang tidak betul. Oleh itu, pemantauan ketat terhadap sanitasi sepanjang proses pengeluaran penting memastikan keselamatan produk tenu-su," kata beliau.

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA  
MUKA SURAT : 33  
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

UTUSAN MALAYSIA M/S 33 O NEGERI 30/11/2024 ( SABTU )

## Lapan kes kencing tikus dikesan di Ulu Bendul

**SEREMBAN:** Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri, Negeri Sembilan (JK-KNS) mengesahkan menerima lapan notifikasi wabak disyaki Leptospirosis (penyakit kencing tikus) dengan pesakit mempunyai sejarah mengunjungi pusat rekreasi di Ulu Bendul, Kuala Pilah pada 10 hingga 16 November lalu.

Pengarah JK-KNS, Datuk Dr. Harlina Abdul Rashid berkata, pada 19 November lalu, Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah (PKD) Seremban menerima tiga notifikasi kes disyaki Leptospirosis dari Klinik Kesihatan Sendayan di sini yang melibatkan sebuah keluarga dengan gejala demam, muntah dan cirit-birit.

Menurut beliau, pesakit mempunyai sejarah mengunjungi pusat rekreasi itu pada 10 November.

Katanya, PKD Seremban turut menerima pertambahan lima notifikasi kes dengan gejala sama dengan sejarah ke pusat rekreasi sama antara 10 November hingga 16 November lalu.

"Jumlah keseluruhan kes adalah sebanyak lapan kes di mana satu kes dimasukkan ke wad untuk rawatan lanjut manakala tujuh kes lagi telah diberikan rawatan pesakit luar.

"Sampel klinikal pesakit telah diantar ke Makmal Kes-



**PUSAT** rekreasi Ulu Bendul di Kuala Pilah ditutup bagi kerja-kerja penyelenggaraan dan pembersihan selepas lapan kes wabak kencing tikus dikesan di kawasan berkenaan.

hatan Awam Kesihatan (MKAK) Sungai Buloh untuk ujian pengesahan Leptospirosis.

"Penilaian risiko telah dijalankan ke atas pusat rekreasi tersebut dan sampel persekitaran turut diantar ke MKAK Sungai Buloh untuk ujian pengesahan," katanya kepada

pemberita semalam.

Dr. Harlina berkata, tindakan kawalan dan pencegahan sewajarnya telah diambil oleh agensi berkaitan dan pusat rekreasi berkenaan telah ditutup sementara waktu oleh pihak berkuasa tempatan (PBT) bermula semalam hingga 15 Di-

seber bagi membolehkan kerja-kerja penyelenggaraan dan pembersihan dijalankan.

Pusat rekreasi Ulu Bendul kini ditutup bagi kerja-kerja penyelenggaraan dan pembersihan selepas lapan kes wabak kencing tikus dikesan di kawasan berkenaan.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN  
MUKA SURAT : 16  
RUANGAN : CETUSAN

SINAR HARIAN M/S 16 CETUSAN 30/11/2024 (SABTU)

# Air mata Menteri Kesihatan



LIM CHEE WEI

**D**ewan perbahasan di Parlimen yang biasanya hangat dengan pidato pedas dan bahasa kias baru-baru ini bertukar sejuk dan suram sejenak.

Air mata Menteri Kesihatan, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad menjadi punca utama tempo perbahasan tergendala seketika pabila Ahli Parlimen Kuala Selangor tersebut sebak dan tidak mampu meneruskan ucapan sehingga Yang Dipertua Dewan terpaksa menenangkan beliau.

Dr Dzulkefly yang ketika itu sedang berucap dalam sesi Penggulungan Rang Undang-Undang Perbekalan 2025 Peringkat Jawatankuasa Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM), tidak dapat menahan emosi beliau selepas mendengar kisah yang dibawa oleh Ahli Parlimen Tenom, Riduan Rubin mengenai nasib seorang pesakit buah pinggang yang tidak mampu menanggung kos rawatan hemodialisis dan kos peng-

angkutan ke pusat rawatan sehingga tergadai nyawa.

Dengan nada sebak, Dr Dzulkefly mengakui hakikat bahawa bukan semua rakyat mampu membayar caj rawatan dialisis dan hemodialisis, diperitakan lagi oleh faktor tidak semua kawasan dilengkapi fasiliti rawatan serta kos pengangkutan yang perlu ditanggung pesakit untuk hadir ke pusat rawatan tiga kali seminggu.

Mudah-mudahan air mata Dr Dzulkefly dapat menghidupkan harapan para pesakit yang terus merayu kepada pihak KKM untuk mewujudkan satu mekanisme pengecualian caj rawatan bagi golongan yang kurang kemampuan, di samping pertambahan peruntukan bagi menambah fasiliti dan mesin rawatan dialisis dan hemodialisis bagi menjamin akses pesakit kepada rawatan.

Dalam senyap, penyakit buah pinggang kini muncul sebagai salah satu ancaman utama kesihatan rakyat Malaysia. Kira-kira 15 peratus atau lebih kurang lima juta rakyat Malaysia dijangka berdepan risiko masalah penyakit buah pinggang (CKD), namun ramai yang tidak sedar akan ancaman tersebut.

Ketua Eksekutif Pusat Galen untuk Dasar Kesihatan dan Sosial, Azrul Mohd Khalib dilaporkan berkata, kadar pesakit

“

Dalam senyap, penyakit buah pinggang kini muncul sebagai salah satu ancaman utama kesihatan rakyat Malaysia.”

buah pinggang tahap akhir (ESRD) terus menunjukkan peningkatan dalam tempoh 20 tahun. Ketika ini, 51,000 pesakit menghidap ESRD dan ia adalah antara kadar tertinggi di dunia.

Azrul berkata, KKM sebelum ini dilaporkan menjangkakan lebih 106,000 rakyat Malaysia bakal menjalani dialisis menjelang tahun 2040 jika peningkatan kadar kegagalan buah pinggang tidak berubah. Setiap tahun, lebih 10,000 pesakit didiagnosis dan memerlukan rawatan dialisis dari jumlah ini semakin meningkat.

Menurut Pakar Perunding Nefrologi dan Pemindahan Buah Pinggang dari Pusat Perubatan Sunway (SMC), Dr Rosnawati Yahya, hampir separuh daripada pesakit di Malaysia ialah penghidap diabetes, risiko kesihatan serius berkaitan dengan pengambilan gula berlebihan. Beliau berkata, dia-

tes yang tidak terkawal dalam jangka masa panjang boleh merosakkan buah pinggang dan meningkatkan risiko kegagalan buah pinggang.

Penulis berpendangan bahawa KKM tidak perlu bertindak sendirian dalam usaha menambah fasiliti rawatan. Banyak pertubuhan bukari kerajaan (NGO) di peringkat akar umbi sebenarnya telah melakukan pelbagai usaha seperti mewujudkan pusat dialisis yang memberi kemudahan subsidi rawatan atau caj rendah kepada pesakit.

Usaha NGO-NGO tersebut walaupun kecil berbanding bajet KKM yang berbilion-bilion, namun usaha mulia mereka amat bermakna dalam konteks menambah akses rawatan kepada pesakit bagi memastikan kelancaran kehidupan harian mereka.

Walaupun pesakit perlu menerima rawatan tiga kali seminggu dan empat jam sekali rawatan, namun majoriti mereka masih boleh menjalankan kehidupan harian seperti biasa, malah ada yang terus berjaya dalam sektor kerjaya masing-masing.

Rawatan bukan titik noktah perjalanan hidup, ujian itu sementara, usah putus asa hingga menyerahnya nyawa.

\* Lim Chee Wei ialah anak jati Kedah yang minat filem retro.