

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NATION

THE STAR M/S NATION 5/2/2025 (RABU)

Medical assistance at the ready for Thaipusam

KUALA LUMPUR: This year's Thaipusam celebration at Batu Caves will feature enhanced medical and emergency response services, as an estimated 1.2 to 1.5 million devotees and visitors are expected to gather at the temple site on the day.

To manage the large number of devotees, a Central Control Command Communication and Coordination unit has been established under the directive of Sri Maha Mariamman Temple Devasthanam (SMMTD) chairman Tan Sri R. Nadaraja to ensure a streamlined emergency response system.

The temple's medical and emergency coordinator for Thaipusam 2025, Datuk Dr AT Kumararajah, said the initiative is aimed at ensuring efficient management of the large number of devotees and visitors.

"The Selayang Emergency and Trauma Team will be mobilised to provide continuous medical support throughout the festival. As Batu Caves is the focal point of the celebrations, the team has been preparing to handle potential medical emergencies," he said in

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a statement, Bernama reported.

He added that the medical commander for Thaipusam 2025 and an emergency medical specialist at Hospital Selayang, Dr Nabil Muhammad, has been leading this initiative for over a decade, with the involvement of eight hospitals under the Health Ministry (KKM) alongside nine government agencies, uniformed bodies, and volunteer organisations.

Among the participating agencies are KKM, the Malaysian Red

Crescent Society, St John Ambulance Wilayah Persekutuan, Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), Persatuan Kecemasan Sukarelawan Malaysia (PKSM), Pertubuhan Sukarelawan Ambulans India Malaysia, the Fire and Rescue Department and National Blood Centre.

A total of 1,500 personnel will be deployed to provide a secure environment for all attendees.

Meanwhile, Dr Nabil said emergency response zones have been introduced this year at Batu Caves to improve accessibility and response time during critical situations.

He said the coverage extends beyond the 5.6ha Batu Caves grounds to the riverside, including where the kavadi begin their journey and the temple's interior.

"The layout ensures that emergency teams can navigate dense crowds efficiently, thus reducing response times and providing immediate assistance.

"The other hotspot is the 272 steps leading to the main cave temple, as well as the 14km route taken by the silver chariot from Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in

Jalan Tun HS Lee to Batu Caves," he said.

SMMTD trustee Datuk N. Sivakumar said the silver chariot procession, bearing the idol of Lord Muruga, will depart from Sri Maha Mariamman Temple on Jalan Tun HS Lee at 9pm on Feb 9.

He said preparations include collaborations with the Royal Malaysia Police, Selayang Municipal Council, and local authorities to ensure an orderly and safe pilgrimage route.

Meanwhile, the Kedah government announced that Feb 11 will be an occasional holiday in conjunction with the Thaipusam celebration.

Kedah deputy state secretary (Management) Datuk Dr Nadzman Mustaffa, in his official letter to state and Federal heads of departments, said yesterday that the occasional holiday is in line with the provisions under Section 9(1) of the Holidays Act 1951 (Act 369).

FOR MORE:
See StarMetro page 4

AKHBAR : THE SUN DAILY
MUKA SURAT : 4
RUANGAN : NATION

THE SUNDAILY MISC NATION 5/2/2025 (RABU)

executive council meeting. – Bernama

Enhanced medical, emergency response services for Thaipusam

KUALA LUMPUR: This year's Thaipusam celebration at Batu Caves will feature enhanced medical and emergency response services, as 1.5 million devotees and visitors are expected to gather at the temple cave site on Feb 11.

To manage the large influx of devotees, a central control command communication and coordination unit has been established under the directive of Sri Maha Mariamman Temple Devasthanam (SMMTD) chairman Tan Sri R. Nadaraja ensuring a streamlined emergency response system.

SMMTD medical and emergency coordinator for Thaipusam 2025 Datuk Dr A.T. Kumararajah said the initiative is to ensure efficient management of the large influx of participants.

"The Selayang emergency and trauma team will be mobilised to provide continuous medical support throughout the festival. Given that Batu Caves is the focal point of the celebrations, the

team has been preparing to handle potential medical emergencies," he said in a statement.

He added that medical commander for Thaipusam 2025 and an emergency medical specialist at Hospital Selayang Dr Nabil Muhammad has been leading this initiative for over a decade, with the involvement of eight hospitals under the Health Ministry alongside nine government agencies, uniformed bodies and volunteer organisations.

Among the participating agencies are the ministry, Malaysian Red Crescent Society, Federal Territory St John Ambulance, Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), Persatuan Kecemasan Sukarelawan Malaysia, Pertubuhan Sukarelawan Ambulans India Malaysia, Fire and Rescue Department and National Blood Centre.

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"The layout ensures that emergency teams can navigate dense crowds efficiently, thus reducing response times and providing immediate assistance.

"The other hotspot is the 272 steps leading to the main cave temple, as well as the 14km route taken by the silver chariot from Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Jalan Tun H.S. Lee to Batu Caves," he said.

Batu Caves and surrounding areas have been divided into 24 medical zones, including specific hotspots such as the Dark Cave, KTM station, riverside, and flyover in front of the temple's

main entrance. The zones are numbered and divided into categories A and B, such as 5A and 12B.

SMMTD trustee Datuk N. Sivakumar said the silver chariot procession, bearing the statue of Lord Murugan, will depart from Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Jalan Tun H.S. Lee at 9pm on Feb 9, covering a 15km journey to Batu Caves.

He said preparations include collaborations with the police, Selayang Municipal Council, and local authorities.

"At least 100,000 devotees are expected to accompany the chariot.

"The Devasthanam (SMMTD) will deploy 1,500 volunteers over the three-day festival, while enforcement agencies, including Kuala Lumpur City Hall, will help monitor crowd movements and prevent overcrowding," he said. – Bernama

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 3
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

Harian Metro m/s 3 5/2/2025 (RABU)

Insaf Murni Malaysia kesan golongan berisiko dijangkiti

Kajang: Persatuan Insaf Murni Malaysia mengambil inisiatif membantu mengesan golongan berisiko dijangkiti HIV di Selangor dalam usaha mengurangkan kemudaran kepada individu dan masyarakat.

Pengurusnya, Mohd Afiq Mohamad Khairi berkata, pihaknya aktif menjalankan kempen bersama Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) berkaitan penggunaan jarum dan suntikan dalam kalangan pengguna dadah sejak 2009.

Bagaimanapun, katanya, KKM meminta pihaknya memperluaskan aktiviti pengurangan kemudaran jangkitan HIV dengan membabitkan jangkitan melalui hubungan seksual.

“Ada beberapa golongan utama yang diberi perhatian dalam aktiviti berkenaan iaitu pekerja seks, individu melakukan seks rambang, individu mengamalkan hubungan sejenis, transgender dan pasangan kepada individu berisiko selain pengguna dadah,” katanya ketika ditemui di pejabatnya, di sini.

Mohd Afiq berkata, pihaknya mengambil pendekatan masuk ke dalam kepompong golongan terbahit untuk mendekati diri dengan mereka.

“Tumpuan kami sekarang adalah mengurangkan risiko berlakunya jangkitan baru HIV menerusi hubungan seks.

“Justeru itu, kami akan mencari individu berisiko berkenaan di lokasi mereka berkumpul. Bagi kategori individu mengamalkan hubungan sejenis, kami cuba kesan mereka melalui aplikasi ‘dating’.



MOHD AFIQ

“Kemudian kami akan mendekati mereka dan galakkan individu berkenaan untuk membuat ujian saringan sebagai langkah pencegahan dan mengambil tindakan seterusnya sekiranya dijangkiti HIV,” katanya.

Sementara itu, Koordinator Program Persatuan Insaf Murni Malaysia, Mohamad Syarif Saufi berkata, pihaknya membuat saringan terhadap 6,342 individu pada tahun lalu.

“Daripada jumlah itu, 134 individu didapati positif HIV membabitkan 103 individu mengamalkan hubungan sejenis, empat individu transgender serta 27 pengguna dadah.

“Saringan yang dilakukan terhadap individu berisiko ini adalah penting bagi membolehkan mereka mendapatkan rawatan awal selain melakukan pencegahan,” katanya.

Selain melakukan saringan, pihaknya juga memberikan sokongan moral kepada individu yang dijangkiti HIV supaya mereka bersemangat mendapatkan rawatan dan menjalani hidup normal seperti sebelum dijangkiti.

AKHBAR : THE SUN DAILY
MUKA SURAT : 11
RUANGAN : SPEAK UP

SPEAK UP

THE SUNDAILY M/S 11 SPEAKUP 5/2/2025 (RABU)

Religions must focus on public health

ALL travellers have experienced at least one occasion when they set out on a route and yet unknowingly go off-track, only realising it when their senses tell them something is wrong.

This happens on everyone's religious journey but if we fail to realise this, we can keep going on the wrong path. A broad religious guideline is that no dangerous and unhealthy substance is to be taken into the body. Malaysia has long gone off-track.

If we assign equal weightage to three substances that should fall under the guideline - highly sweetened foods, high-nicotine cigarettes and high-alcohol liquor - we are 0%, 50% and 50% compliant, respectively. This gives us an overall compliance of only 33% out of 100%.

Malaysia has the highest number of diabetic cases in Southeast Asia, with one in six adults being diabetic. Diabetes can lead to limb amputation, blindness, kidney failure, hearing failure and nerve damage.

Malaysians are also getting obese, with the prevalence of being overweight among adults standing at 50.1%. In Malaysia, 9.7% of deaths are due to obesity as an attributing risk factor. Resulting sicknesses include diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Diabetes is mainly caused by excessive consumption of refined white sugar put in drinks and dishes. The sugar is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, causing a rapid spike in blood sugar levels prompting the pancreas to release a large amount of insulin to help cells absorb the sugar.

Over time, repeated spikes can lead to insulin resistance with cells becoming less responsive to insulin and more susceptible to developing Type 2 diabetes as well as cancer.

The average Malaysian takes 26 teaspoons of refined white sugar per day - more than four times the recommended maximum.

Has any religious authority recommended severe restrictions on the sale of foods laden with added sugar? Has it preached that natural sugar contained in unprocessed foods is best for health?

Next on the list is tobacco, which is inhaled into the lungs with each breath. Tobacco use has been conclusively proven to be a definite

cause of lung cancer.

It is the biggest risk factor and accounts for 23% of cancer-related deaths worldwide and 17% of all deaths in Malaysia. Individuals who smoke tobacco products increase their risk of death from stroke, coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. On average, 29,457 Malaysians die from smoking each year.

Nicotine, the main stimulant in cigarettes, is the third most addictive drug after heroin and cocaine. Besides nicotine, cigarettes have other chemicals, including 60 which are known to cause cancer.

Data gathered by the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2023 indicates that 4.8 million adult Malaysians smoke tobacco, and of this number 3.7 million smoke daily. Tobacco use continues to be an epidemic in Malaysia, with the age of initiation for smoking getting younger.

Of particular concern to the non-smoking public is that out of eight million people globally who die of tobacco use each year, 1.3 million are non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke.

There has also been an increase of 600% in the number of e-cigarette users over the past 12 years. Over this period, the prevalence of e-cigarette or vape use among those in the 15 to 24 age group jumped from 1.1% to 8.6%.

The National Anti-Drug Agency statistics show that vape devices are not only harmful to health but the use of vapes also lures young people into drug addiction.

Again, has any religious authority recommended severe restrictions on smoking and vaping? They do not because tobacco is not mentioned in any scripture.

Smoking used to be confined to the American continent and it spread around the world only beginning from the 16th century.

Scriptures for the six main religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam - had been compiled well before the 10th century.

We behave like the unthinking maid who did not stop the child from playing with fire because the master's instruction was that the child must not play with water. He did not mention fire.

Fortunately, the government is not waiting for a religious push and has begun enforcing the Control of



Individuals who smoke tobacco products increase their risk of death from stroke, coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease - REUTERS/PIC

Smoking Products for Public Health Act, which covers regulations on the registration, sale, packaging, labelling and the prohibition of smoking in public places. It is a start.

Malaysia should also capitalise on a great economic opportunity here as nicotine does have some medicinal properties when used in tiny doses.

Encourage the public university research and development departments to invent a cigarette that uses only a medically permitted amount of nicotine and no addition of carcinogenic chemicals. It is all a matter of chemistry and rearranging the protons. It has already been done with liquor, and that is our third topic.

Non-Malay politicians are sometimes a disgrace to their own religion by campaigning on grounds of religious freedom for the right of non-Islamic shops to sell liquor without undue restrictions.

A recent issue was the proposal by one local council to stop the sale of alcohol in more areas. What is the problem? If you want a bottle, just travel a bit further.

The Buddha commanded: "You shall drink no maddening drink." He explained that there are "six dangers through being addicted to intoxicating liquors: actual loss of wealth, increase in quarrels, susceptibility to disease, loss of good character, indecent exposure and impaired intelligence".

When two religions emerging from vastly different civilisational regions 1,200 years apart decree the same prohibition, all the rest should take note. Do not be like the maid who said that although both the left and right neighbours instructed their maids to ensure the children do not play on the road, her master did not give such instruction. So, she let his children play on the road.

Removal of near-zero beer

The World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer states that alcohol is a group one carcinogen, putting it in

the company of tobacco.

The US surgeon-general in an advisory last month warned that alcohol consumption is the third leading preventable cause of cancer in the US, after tobacco and obesity. Drinking just once a week is tied to a 10% risk of developing an alcohol-related cancer.

Alcohol also kills or maims. Sept 2024: a company supervisor was sentenced to 10 years in jail for driving under the influence of alcohol, causing the death of another driver and leaving his three children with permanent disabilities. Aug 2024: two college students were killed when a 23-year-old motorist, believed to be driving under the influence of alcohol, skidded and entered the opposite lane. May 2024: a national kayaker had to be admitted to ICU after a drunk driver hit her motorcycle.

However, the number of fatal drunk crashes is not half as deadly as the tragic fact that Malaysia has long rejected a marvellous technological invention that reduces or removes the alcohol content in liquor. The local industry turns its back on it and politicians see this new technology as a vote-spoiler.

Spirits, wine and beer containing low or zero alcohol by volume are becoming the rage around the world because of growing public concern for health and safety. Spirits are the main target for reduction as their alcohol by volume (ABV) is at least 20%, much higher than wine and beer.

The most popular spirit in Malaysia is whiskey. One master distiller in California has won multiple awards for its zero-alcohol whiskey with a convincing bit and afterburn, reminiscent of high ABV whiskey. It is also completely free of calories, gluten and sugar.

The next target is beer as drinkers tend to down one bottle or can after another, resulting in the alcohol intake matching that of spirits.

Six years ago, a near-zero beer

was introduced to Malaysia. Instead of the standard 5% ABV, it contained less than 0.05% alcohol. It tasted like the real thing. But it was soon removed from all shelves. No explanation was given.

It could not be due to poor sales as every product inventor knows the adage: a great marketer can sell bags of sand to an Arab. It is all about creating a demand. Worldwide, low-alcohol beers have achieved a compound annual growth rate of 5.9%.

With one in three French people switching to low- or no-alcohol wine, Bordeaux winemakers have put up a new banner over the entrance to the region's world-famous vineyards: the less the alcohol, the better the wine. As with nicotine, tiny amounts of alcohol are known to have medicinal benefits.

The authorities of all religions in Malaysia need to decide whether they are keen on public health or just want to enforce strictures that were explicitly spelled out a thousand or more years ago, excluding from their concern any health dangers not specifically mentioned in scripture.

One of the main goals of religion is public health. The correct practice is to lobby the government to severely restrict the availability of refined white sugar, cigarettes and high-alcohol liquor.

Religiously permit only medically permissible amounts of any of these three substances to be consumed if the substance is not completely disallowed by the religion.

The law must come down hard. Non-compliant retail outlets must be ordered to close for one week for the first offence, two weeks for the second and three weeks for the third offence.

Penalties must be imposed for urban or rural outlets and shops or roadside stalls with no exception.

Joachim Ng champions interfaith harmony. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 17
RUANGAN : CETUSAN

SINAR HARIAN M15 17 CETUSAN 5/2/2025 (RABU)

Jahatnya manis



KISAH
SEMINGGU

BUDIMAN MOHD ZOHDİ

Anda tidak memintanya tapi ia tiba-tiba ada. Anda minta kopi, ia datang bersama. Anda makan kuih, ia ada di dalamnya. Anda minta nasi, ia turut mengiringinya. Anda tambahkan kicap ke dalam makanan, ia terjun sekali. Anda cicah sos, tercicah ia juga.

Pendek kata ia ada di mana-mana. Walaupun ada masa para pemborong dan peniaga berlumba-lumba menyoroknya, ia tetap ada, tetap muncul dalam bentuk dan wajah yang lain. Tetap 'memperhambakan' diri walaupun kemudian secara perlahan memperhambakan kita. Datangnya membawa manis, tetapi tujuannya untuk meninggalkan pahit.

Beretorik pula tulisan saya kali ini. Apa pun, sebelum meneruskannya saya ingin maklumkan bahawa tulisan ini saya dedikasikan kepada seorang kawan yang setiap kali saya meminta minuman kurang manis, akan ketawa sinis.

Akan berkatalah dia: "Daripada order minuman kurang manis, lebih baiklah minum air suam."

Atau kadang-kadang gurauannya

menjadi lebih kasar, contohnya: "Kalau kena potong kaki pun apa nak risau, sekarang ini kerusi roda banyak. Yang lima speed pun ada."

Itu dahulu. Dua minggu lepas, sebelum terbang ke Jepun, saya sempat mengopi dengannya selepas lebih setahun tidak berjumpa. Saya terkejut apabila dia memesan kopi O kosong.

"Laa, kopi O kosong? Lebih baik minum air paip tepi jalan," kata saya.

Gurauan saya tidak berbalas. Fokus perbualannya selepas itu adalah tentang bagaimana hendak melawan penyakit diabetes dihidapnya. Macam-macam yang saya dengar selain daripada menu-menu sihat, ia juga mengandungi senarai petua-petua yang panjang. Daripada khasiat daun hempedu bumi sehinggalah keajaiban daun morninga. Turut disebut, ubat-ubat tradisional beraneka jenama yang entah diimport, dibuat di kilang atau diproses di belakang dapur.

Kita dibesarkan oleh kebiasaan. Semenjak kecil kita dibiasakan untuk menggemari benda-benda manis. Saya tidak pernah melihat mana-mana ibu memberikan minuman yang masam, pahit atau masin kepada anak kecil mereka. Kalau diberi air tawar pun hanya sekali-sekala. Yang lazim diberi adalah yang lemak, yang manis. Yang berbeza hanya tahap kemanisan.

Seperti namanya gula-gula, tidak kira apa perisanya, waima yang sedikit masam, asasnya tetap mempunyai rasa

yang manis. Kerana manis itulah budak-budak umumnya sukakan gula-gula.

Kita terbawa-bawa dengan kebiasaan itu sehingga dewasa. Kebolehan membancuh diukur dengan manis atau tidak minuman yang disediakan.

"Kedekut gula, kedekut susu, tapi nak berniaga," dialog begitu sering ditujukan kepada penjual yang minumannya tidak mencapai piawaian tertentu. Garis piawaian itu mungkin subjektif, tetapi asasnya secara lazim adalah 'cukup lemak dan cukup manis'.

Kesedapan kuih-muih pun umumnya diukur dengan lemak dan manis. Selepas lebih setengah abad hidup saya belum pernah terjumpa kuih pahit atau kuih masam di dalam balang kuih raya. Kalau kuih yang dibeli, tapi tuan rumah mengaku buat sendiri, memang selalu jumpa.

Dengan begitu besarnya pengaruh benda manis dalam kehidupan kita, maka tidak hairanlah kadar pengambilan gula di negara kita tingginya mencecah awan cirrus. Laporan *The Edge* pada 2020 menunjukkan per kapita pengambilan gula dalam kalangan rakyat Malaysia adalah 50kg, berbanding Thailand 35kg dan Indonesia 20kg.

Jumlah pengambilan gula yang banyak itu sudah tentulah menjadi berrita baik kepada syarikat pengeluaran. Demikian juga dengan pemborong dan penjual, yang mungkin tidak menyedari bahawa selain memperoleh untuk mereka turut berada dalam se-

narai pesakit diabetes.

Laporan Bernama pada 8 Julai 2023 memetik Menteri Kesihatan pada masa itu sebagai berkata, kerajaan membelanjakan RM4.9 bilion setahun bagi melaksanakan usaha menangani penyakit diabetes dalam negara. Ketika itu jumlah penghidap 3.9 juta rakyat dewasa, bayangkan berapa bilion perlu ditambah apabila jumlah pesakit menjadi tujuh juta. Alangkah ruginya wang sebanyak itu dihabiskan hanya untuk melawan penyakit yang sepatutnya boleh dilawan dengan cara mengubah kebiasaan. Itu belum dikira lagi kerugian yang ditanggung oleh negara akibat penderita diabetes yang kehilangan upaya disebabkan serangan ganasnya.

Jadi dalam mood tahun baharu yang masih segar ini, apa kata kita mulakan kempen mengubah kebiasaan. Biasakan untuk berfikir bahawa badan kita sebenarnya tidak memerlukan gula tambahan yang berlebihan. Mengikut syor WHO, kadar pengambilannya tidak harus lebih daripada 10 peratus penggunaan tenaga harian kita.

Selepas membiasakan diri berfikir begitu, mulakanlah langkah pertama dengan menolak segala yang manis-manis, apa sahaja kecuali anak-anak gadis...#dush!

* Datuk Dr Budiman Mohd Zohdi pernah berkhidmat sebagai Setiausaha Politik dan bekas wakil rakyat

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

BH m/s 6 NAs ST21 2025 (RABU)

KPM dedah 20,000 murid terjebak vape

Kementerian Pendidikan (KPM) mendedahkan peningkatan dalam trend penggunaan rokok elektronik atau vape membabitkan murid sekolah dengan 20,000 golongan itu terjebak kegiatan terbabit tahun lalu.

Timbalan Menteri, Wong Kah Woh, berkata angka itu diperolehi berdasarkan statistik yang direkodkan dalam Sistem Sahsiah Diri Murid (SSDM).

Berdasarkan data itu, beliau mendapati trend penggunaan rokok elektronik atau vape dalam kalangan murid sekolah di bawah KPM menunjukkan peningkatan.

“Bagi vape kami tidak menafikan bahawa menandakan satu trend yang meningkat. Pada 2024, sebanyak 19,450 murid dilaporkan terbabit.

“Ini adalah 0.38 peratus daripada jumlah keseluruhan murid yang berdaftar di bawah KPM,” katanya pada sesi pertanyaan jawab lisan di Dewan Rakyat, semalam.

Beliau berkata demikian ketika menjawab soalan tambahan Roslan Hashim (PN-Kulim Bandar Baharu) yang meminta KPM menyatakan statistik pembabitatan murid sekolah dengan rokok elektronik atau vape.

Kah Woh berkata, pada tahun lalu, trend merokok dalam kalangan murid sekolah mencatatkan penurunan.

Mengikut data SSDM, beliau berkata 3,704 murid bersamaan 0.07 peratus daripada keseluruhan murid sekolah dikesan terjerumus dalam kegiatan merokok.