

Covid to cause M'sia to reach ageing nation status faster

SHAH ALAM: Malaysia will reach the ageing nation status earlier than expected if the Covid-19 pandemic continues for a long term, following a decline in the number of births in the country.

National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) director-general Abdul Shukur Abdullah said, based on the projections of the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the country is expected to achieve the ageing nation status by 2030 when 15 percent of its population is aged 60 and above.

"However, with the current Covid-19 pandemic, the status could be attained much earlier.

"In an opinion poll conducted by LPPKN in April 2020 it was found that 53 percent of respondents expected that this pandemic would result in an increase in the number of births.

"However, the majority of the respondents (61 percent) decided to postpone or re-plan their pregnancy," he told Bernama here today.

The Department of Statistics reported that in 2020, the 60 and above population increased from 3.4 million (2019) to 3.5 million representing 10.7 percent of the total population.

Abdul Shukur said there was a 4.4 percent drop in birth rate recorded in the second quarter of this year, compared to the corresponding period last year, and this was expected.

He said among the factors that caused couples to delay having a baby were lack of savings (58 percent), fear of being infected with Covid-19 (34 percent) and fear that access to prenatal treatment would be disrupted due to the pandemic (32 percent).

Elaborating he said, the decline in the number of births would indeed have an impact on the population growth rate which would accelerate ageing of the country's population, and if this trend continues, the country would also experience labour shortage in the future.

"As such, the country will need to rely on foreign labour to overcome the labour shortage. However, by 2050, most foreign outsourcing countries such as India, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Myanmar will also be faced with an ageing population and shortage of local labour," he said.

Abdul Shukur said the situation would force these countries to stop their local workers from migrating to foreign land such as Malaysia.

"In preparing to become an ageing nation, it is important for the country to minimise mismatch between the skills possessed and the jobs done by the people in the country," he said adding that since the pandemic, this mismatch and gap have become more apparent.

Based on the latest statistics released by the Statistics Department it was found that the number of unemployed graduates had increased by 22.5 percent, from around 165,200 people in 2019 to around 202,400 in 2020.

During the same period, it was reported that the percentage of graduates working in the skilled category had decreased by 0.8 percent while those working in the semi -skilled category increased by 19.3 percent, mainly for service and sales jobs and as machine operators and assemblers.

In the meantime, he said the results of the LPPKN study in 2018 projected the country has the potential and would experience a population shrinkage for the first time in 2072.

“In the study, it was projected that the country’s population will continue to increase until it reaches a maximum of 46.09 million people in 2071 before beginning to drop to 46.08 million people in 2072,” he said.

However, Abdul Shukur said there was a possibility that the country would experience a population shrinkage much earlier, if the number of births continued to decline as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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