

Wed, May 13 2009 - KUALA LUMPUR: The number of people hospitalised with suspected meningitis in Malacca Hospital rose to 38 on Tuesday, from 31 the day before. This brings the number hospitalised nationwide to 39 including one Road Transport Department (JPJ) academy trainee hospitalised in Kepala Batas who is in stable condition.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said four of the new patients who developed symptoms were trainees who had been quarantined at the academy hostel in Tiang Dua, Malacca.

Two more are radiographers while another is the fiancée of one of the trainees, he said, adding that all of them were in the isolation ward while the two trainees in Intensive Care Unit were now able to walk.

The source of infection has not been discovered and we are working hard to find the carrier, he said yesterday after the International Nurses Day celebration.

On whether the family members of the trainee's fiancée needed to be quarantined, Liow said the Ministry would find out if they had been in contact.

On the influenza A(H1N1) virus, Liow said Malaysia was keeping a check on its borders and that there was enough Tamiflu stocked up in the event the flu hits Malaysia.

I have told the health director-general to step up precautionary efforts so that hospital staff do not get infected, he said adding that they were monitoring the situation closely.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican said surveillance against the disease was constantly being beefed up with more thermal scanners placed at entry points.

There are updates in the Ministry website, apart from calling the National Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre for information.

As of today, Malaysia remains free of the infection as no cases are detected on our shores, he said, adding that on Monday 6,440 individuals, most of whom entered the country via airports, were screened and none were referred to hospitals. A total of 55,002 air passengers have been screened so far.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry in a statement urged non-essential travel to the United States, Mexico, Canada, Spain and Britain to be deferred because 96.8% of reported A (H1N1) cases are from these countries.

Travellers, it said must especially defer going to Illinois, Wisconsin and California in the US.

If trips to these places are unavoidable, travellers are advised to consult physicians for seasonal flu vaccination.

Travellers should also inform the nearest Malaysian mission of their whereabouts.