

New US kit can test in hours instead of weeks

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KUALA LUMPUR: Testing for the influenza A (H1N1) virus will take only six hours instead of three weeks once a new test kit arrives from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the Institute for Medical Research (IMR) would receive the new kit soon.

"I am satisfied with IMR's preparations. The institute is ready to receive samples from hospitals 24 hours a day," he said yesterday after visiting the institute.

Now, upon receiving a sample, the institute tests whether it is influenza type A, B or C.

This takes six hours. If the sample is influenza A, but is not the normal subtype H1 or H3, it is further tested to confirm whether it is the new H1N1 virus.

This can take up to three weeks.

Liow said a sample that tested positive for the virus would be sent to the World Health Organisation's referral laboratory in Melbourne, Australia, for confirmation.

He said WHO reported yesterday that 658 laboratory-confirmed cases of H1N1 infection had been diagnosed in 16 countries.

The countries that have reported confirmed cases with no deaths are: Austria (1), Canada (51), Hong Kong (1), Costa Rica (1), Denmark (1), France (2), Germany (6), Is-



INFLUENZA A (H1N1)

■ Call 03-88810200, 88810300 during office hours or visit www.moh.gov.my for information on influenza A

rael (3), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (4), South Korea (1), Spain (13), Switzerland (1) and the United Kingdom (15).

Liow said preventive measures had been stepped up, including placing thermal scanners at the Sabah, Sarawak and Penang airports.

"We put scanners at Sabah and Sarawak airports as they are entry points for visitors from Hong Kong, which has one confirmed case of the virus."

He told the media not to jump the gun by using the term "suspected case of influenza A H1N1" when someone was placed under observation or quarantined.

"You have to wait for the test results. Otherwise, it will create panic, as in Penang recently when a Chinese daily reported that Malaysia had a suspected case of the virus."

INFLUENZA A (H1N1) INFECTIONS

Ireland, Costa Rica and Italy have confirmed their first cases of the H1N1 flu, bringing to 18 the number of countries worldwide with confirmed cases

COUNTRIES WITH INFLUENZA A (H1N1) CASES

As of May 3, 1000 GMT



"Mexico cut its suspected death toll from the H1N1 flu to up to 101 from as many as 176, as dozens of test samples came back negative. French health officials said there were seven probable cases and 22 possible cases

The World Health Organisation said yesterday its laboratories had confirmed a total of 658 H1N1 flu infections in 16 countries, including 16 deaths in Mexico. The WHO's toll lags national reports about the virus but is considered more scientifically secure

North and Central America

Mexico*	2,500	397	101
United States	-	160	1
Canada	-	51	-
Costa Rica	2	1	-
Guatemala	3	-	-
Belize	2	-	-
El Salvador	2	-	-

South America

Colombia	29	-	-
Argentina	17	-	-
Brazil	14	-	-
Venezuela	9	-	-
Peru	7	-	-
Chile	4	-	-

Asia/Australia

New Zealand	149	3	-
Israel	29	3	-
Hong Kong	-	1	-
South Korea	28	1	-
Australia	80	-	-

Europe

Spain	99	20	-
Britain	642	13	-
Germany	12	5	-
France*	41	2	-
Switzerland	23	1	-
Austria	2	1	-
Italy	17	1	-
Ireland	-	1	-
Netherlands	-	1	-
Denmark	-	1	-
Finland	1	-	-
Norway	1	-	-
Sweden	1	-	-

Africa

South Africa	2	-	-
Benin	1	-	-

S Suspected cases D Deaths
C Confirmed cases