

Obesity among Malaysians on the rise

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HEALTH CONCERN More people suffering from diabetes due to being overweight

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Malaysia has the highest obesity rate in Southeast Asia and is ranked sixth in the Asia-Pacific region, the house heard yesterday.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Shirlin said this was a cause for concern, considering that three million of the 28 million Malaysians were diagnosed with diabetes, a disease closely associated with obesity.

It was reported that an overweight, or obese, person had higher risk of getting diabetes, heart attack, high blood pressure as well as cancer.

In 2006, the National Health Morbidity Survey found that 43.1 per cent of the adult population were overweight, with 14 per cent of them obese.

"The number of Malaysians diagnosed with diabetes had increased by two-fold, from 1.5 million in 2006 to about three million now.

"The report will be available by end of this year," she said to a supplementary question by Salahuddin Ayub (Pas-Kubang Kerian), who had asked on the number of diabetic patients in the country and the measures taken to curb the problem.

Rosnah said the daily sugar intake among Malaysians was too high, at 51g, which was above the recommendation by the World Health Organisation at 50g.

"In our survey in 2002 to 2003, we found that Malaysians consume an average seven tablespoons of artificial sweeteners, four ta-

blespoons of sugar and three spoons of condensed milk in their beverages," she said in reply to an earlier question from Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong).

"This is something we should think together and promote awareness among the people to reduce sugar intake."

Rosnah said out of the 1,266 food samples analysed in 2009, 92 samples, or 7.3 per cent, were found to have too much sugar.

Last year, 2,004 samples were analysed, of which 108 samples, or 5.4 per cent, had excessive amount of sugar, she said.

Rosnah said the government was also concerned that many people had yet to go for tests to diagnose and detect diabetic-related health problems.

"We estimate about two million people have not received any treatment for diabetes."



AT THE DEWAN RAKYAT YESTERDAY

National Health Morbidity Survey

Number of Malaysians diagnosed with diabetes

1.5m

sufferers in 2006

3m

sufferers this year