



At the dewan rakyat

Reports by MARTIN CARVALHO, HEMANANTHANI SIVAMANDAM, LOSHANA K. SHAGAR and D. KANYAKUMARI

50 N. Koreans to be deported soon

FIFTY North Koreans in Sarawak who over-stayed their visas will be deported soon, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamdi said.

He said they were being held at the Immigration detention depot in Sarawak. "Those with valid visas can stay," he said. Dr Ahmad Zahid, who is the Home Minister, said a total of 315 North Koreans were in Malaysia.

He also confirmed that the body of Kim Jong-nam, who was killed on Feb 13, was embalmed to better preserve it.

He said the body was taken out of Hospital Kuala Lumpur for the procedure.

"Because if kept in the mortuary, it might decompose. So, we did this to preserve the body," said Dr Ahmad Zahid.

Bitter truth of raw sugar prices

Weak ringgit and rise in cost adding to hike, says Hamzah

THE 11-sen hike in the price of raw sugar is due to the weak ringgit and overall increase in the cost of raw sugar.

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin told the House that the price of raw sugar in 2013 was US\$0.15 per pound when the ringgit was at RM3.20 to the US dollar.

"Now, it is US\$0.21 (92 sen) per pound and the US dollar exchange is at RM4.46. The cost of import of raw sugar itself has increased and from our calculation, it is almost a 100% hike," he said during question time yesterday. Mohd Fasihah Mohd Fakhri (BN-Sabak

Bernam) had asked about the factors which contributed to the rise in the price of sugar by 11 sen to RM2.95 per kg from March 1.

Hamzah said Malaysia imported all its raw sugar, adding that the 3.8% hike in the price per kg was minimal.

The minister took the opportunity to provide some advice on sugar consumption.

"We should actually be looking at reducing the intake of sugar. The World Health Organisation says an individual should only consume an average of 9kg of sugar a year."

"But Malaysians consume an average of 25kg of sugar a year! If we reduce the intake of sugar, then this 3.8% hike in price will not

cause a big impact," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, the minister said the commodity was still cheaper in the country than in Thailand, from where Malaysia imports half its raw sugar needs.

"In Thailand, the retail price of sugar is RM3.20 per kg," he said.

The Government recently announced that coarse granulated white sugar would be capped at RM2.95 per kg, up from RM2.84.



For more reports
See page 18

More slots at training hospitals opening up for housemen

DEPUTY Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya said houseman training hospitals will open up more slots for housemanship.

"At the moment, we have a total of 10,835 housemen in 44 teaching hospitals and Royal Military Hospitals nationwide."

"The ministry plans to include Hospital Shah Alam and Hospital Langkawi in the list of houseman training hospitals."

"These hospitals have stated that they are willing to increase the number of training slots for housemen," he told Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh).

Dr Hilmi added that the Public Service Commission had interviewed 3,474 medical graduates as at December 2016, with 1,687 of

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Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya

them already placed in hospitals.

On the issue of too many medical graduates in Malaysia, he said the existing moratorium on new medical programmes at tertiary education institutions would restore balance in

demand and supply.

"Under the moratorium, we have been able to ensure there will be no more new medical courses on top of the 44 programmes already in place locally," he said.

"However, we cannot stop potential students from enrolling in the 335 accredited tertiary institutions overseas," he said.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry is preparing a working paper for approval to import generic drugs for the treatment of Hepatitis C. Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said this was to import sofosbuvir which was

much cheaper compared to sofosbuvir innovator. He said the estimated cost to treat Hepatitis C using sofosbuvir in combination

with other medications could reach up to RM300,000 per patient.

"Due to the high cost, the ministry has been looking into ways to increase access for Hepatitis C treatment in Malaysia."

"One way to get cheaper sofosbuvir is by using government rights where Malaysia gets to import the generic medicine at a cheaper price," he said in a written reply to Charles Santiago (DAP-Klang).

Dr Subramaniam said since 2003 until last December, a total of 20,023 Hepatitis C cases were reported.

Last year, he said, 3,393 new cases were reported with a notification rate of 8.58 for every 100,000 people.

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