

UGM Epidemiologist: 3M Are Still Necessary to be Implemented in Large-Scale Social Restriction

Thursday, 07 January 2021 WIB, By: Natasa Adelayanti




The central government intends to implement a large-scale social restriction (PSBB) for several regions/cities in Java and Bali from 11-25 January 2021. This policy is based on a limited meeting at the President's Office as a way to control the Covid-19 increased case in Indonesia.

According to Bayu Satria Wiratama as a UGM epidemiologist, the government's decision to issue this policy is relevant to today's condition due to the increasing number of extreme Covid-19 cases in Indonesia lately. Not to mention, there is a condition where beds in hospitals/health facilities are full, and the high mortality rate also occurs.

"The main factor is the flow of citizens during last year's holiday. Additionally, some regions have not succeeded in handling Covid-19, making the case incredibly more increased. This condition is very worrying if we don't stop it, the frequency of full-bed-hospital may reach up to 100 percent, given it even more difficult for people who really need hospital care and also it makes an increase in death rate," he said on Thursday (7/1)

Meanwhile, Bayu was not sure why the government implemented this PSBB because of a new Covid-19 virus variant. According to him, to date, the new variant has not been detected in Indonesia. In fact, the Eijkman Institute and other research centers are still conducting studies on genome



sequencing to observe whether the cases around November-December have new variants from the UK or not.

"So, for now, we cannot say that the new variant of SARS-COV-2 from England is the root of the increased number of cases in Indonesia," he said.

Bayu said that to reduce the high rate of transmission, besides enacting PSBB, there should be an improvement in regional tracing ability. There should be more intensity in conducting the test because one of the test sources is the result of cases of contact tracing. This effort determines whether the region has met the WHO standard for minimum testing, where it should be 1 test per 1,000 people per week and a positivity rate below 5 percent.

Besides, the community should continue improving community discipline about 3M (wearing masks, washing hands, maintaining distance). The government needs to highly support this kind of effort by providing education and examples.

"Please do not tell the public to adhere to 3M and not go on vacation outside, but the officials are doing sideways," he explained.

According to Bayu, the high mortality rate recently could also be provoked by people with comorbidities. Because of the increased number of hospital-care demands, some of them got late-treatment.

Even so, Bayu said that there had been no official data released on the total patients infected with Covid-19 until now. The government has never officially released detailed data on the percentage of people who died because of comorbid, non-comorbid, and others.

"The matter of the full-treatment hospital makes it difficult. However, that does not mean it is impossible to overcome this situation. The government should have thought about the worst case if the hospital is full whether it is necessary to build emergency tents, use a large hall because everything requires meticulous preparation regarding tools and human resources," he said.

To anticipate that it will not be like the end-of-year holiday phenomenon, Bayu hopes that the government will implement a more strict PSBB in cooperation with owners of restaurants, shops, malls, and others. If necessary, for restaurants and others, it applies if they only receive 50 percent guests or must make reservations in advance.

"If necessary, fines for 3M violators can also be an alternative with a clear standard operating procedure (SOP). But the most important thing is good cooperation between the government, private sector, businessmen, universities, society, and the community," he added.

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