



MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

**ASEAN REGION WILL INVEST TO END TB. SAVE LIVES  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY 2022  
24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022**

Each year, we commemorate World Tuberculosis Day on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic. This year's world TB day's theme is "Invest to End TB. Save Lives", which conveys the urgent need to invest resources to ramp up the fight against TB. This is especially critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that has put our End TB progress at risk. The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed years of progress in providing essential TB services and reducing the TB disease burden. The most obvious impact is a large global drop in the number of people newly diagnosed and reported with TB.

Global targets for reductions in the burden of tuberculosis disease have been set as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and the End TB Strategy 2035 with the TB incidence rate as the key indicator for measurement of progress. The End TB Strategy calls for the introduction of new tools to fight TB and ASEAN Member States (AMS) need to have a major step up in financial support to bring game-changing diagnostics, drugs and drug regimens, and vaccines to market by the End TB Strategy deadline. Investment for a new TB vaccine that is safe and more effective

than BCG that can protect against all forms of TB in adolescents and adults would be the most powerful tool for rapidly reducing TB incidence.

Digital technologies are changing healthcare delivery globally, as witnessed by the dramatic growth in such areas as electronic health records, telehealth for “virtual” patient encounters, and teleradiology for remote interpretation of imaging studies. There is also increasing recognition that digital technologies can support medication adherence. Therefore, AMS should explore the use of digital technologies for ongoing communication and reference for management of TB patients between countries.

Investment for TB control and prevention is not just within the healthcare system, it goes beyond other ministries and countries. Issues like poverty and lack of social protection, malnutrition, overcrowding and poor living or working conditions and migration also needs attention and must be widely acknowledged by various AMS.

The world shares one vision of; **‘A world free of tuberculosis – zero deaths, disease and suffering due to tuberculosis’**. AMS need to further scale up rapid and early diagnosis, expand people-centred care by moving it nearer to patients and their families and introducing shorter and more effective treatment regimens, including the rational use of medicines to avoid further development of antimicrobial resistance, expand preventive therapy and research for new tools to prevent TB more efficiently. AMS also must boost intersectoral approaches and civil society organisations in improving psychosocial support systems for patients and their families. Together, we will end TB in the ASEAN Region by 2035.