Star Special

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HEALTHY LIVING FOR ALL

Safer births for every mother

AS Malaysia charts a path toward stronger health systems and safer births, new national policies and community initiatives are breathing fresh hope into maternal and child health across the country.

Maternal health challenges

Malaysia's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) returned to its pre-pandemic levels in 2022 and 2023, at around 26.0 and 25.7 deaths per 100,000 live births, after peaking at 68.2 in 2021—a spike attributed to disrupted prenatal access during Covid-19 lockdowns. While these gains are encouraging, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and academic experts warn that maternal morbidity remains high, with mothers facing anaemia, gestational diabetes, obesity and hypertensive disorders.

Despite 98% of expectant mothers receiving at least four antenatal visits and nearly all births being attended by skilled personnel, the quality of care remains inconsistent. Malaysia's near-miss ratio—a measure of life-threatening complications that mothers survive—is still higher than that in higher-income countries, signalling room for improvement.

Initiatives powering change

1. WHO-Malaysia: "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures"

Aligning with the World Health Organization's (WHO) global campaign, Malaysia is renewing its commitment to maternal and newborn health by focusing not just on survival, but on holistic well-being. Key efforts include universal first-trimester antenatal care, Tdap vaccination to protect newborns from pertussis, hepatitis B screening and reducing maternal anaemia.

2. Expanding Maternal-Foetal Medicine (MFM) Services

High-risk pregnancies—driven by rising rates of gestational diabetes (affecting up to 18% of expectant mothers) and obesity—are stretching existing resources. Malaysia is now investing in maternal-foetal medicine units, better foetal imaging, genetic screening and more trained specialists. Efforts to strengthen neonatal intensive care and postpartum support are also underway.

Rural outreach and equity

According to the 2024 statistics report *Women Empowerment in Selected Domains* by the Department of Statistics Malaysia's (DOSM), states such as Terengganu (MMR: 11.5), Pahang and Selangor (both 16.6) lead in maternal safety, whereas higher mortality ratios persist in Kuala Lumpur (37.3), Sabah (36.6) and Kedah (38.4). Addressing rural access gaps, especially in remote areas, remains critical. Advocates have proposed expanding telehealth services and strengthening emergency response capacity in underserved communities, including Indigenous and migrant populations.

Community and civil society role

Non-profits like Mercy Malaysia, alongside government efforts, continue to provide health education, psychosocial support and outreach services to vulnerable women, including migrants and stateless communities. These partnerships are essential in addressing both medical and social determinants of maternal health.

Path to safer births

To sustain the gains in maternal and child health, Malaysia is focusing on several factors. These include shrinking the MMR further through better quality antenatal and emergency obstetric care, reducing preventable infant deaths by addressing low birth weight, hypertensive disorders and under-resourced neonatal care, scaling up maternal-foetal medicine in underserved regions, strengthening postpartum care, including mental health and long-term follow-up for women with gestational complications. – **By Dr Vilma Ajijul Jana, Management and Science University (MSU) Faculty of Health & Life Sciences Senior Lecturer**

Dr Vilma Ajijul Jana.

Malaysia is renewing its commitment to ensuring maternal and newborn health.

Boosting wellness and relaxation

GINTELL proudly introduces the all-new S5 Pro Massage Chair – an innovative solution designed to make healthy living more accessible for everyone. In today's fast-paced world, the S5 Pro supports a holistic lifestyle by promoting better circulation, relieving fatigue and encouraging daily relaxation. More than just comfort, it complements a well-rounded approach to wellness that includes physical care, mental well-being and proper nutrition – making healthier living achievable for all.

Crafted with a sophisticated black and brown leather finish, the S5 Pro Massage Chair blends style and functionality to complement any modern living space. The S5 Pro Massage Chair features 8D Twin Rollers that protrude 13 to 15cm, allowing precise humanised spot massage on the upper back (neck and shoulders) and lower back (spine and waist) simultaneously. This innovative design mimics professional masseuse techniques using a combination of intelligent traditional massage techniques. This dual massage roller provides more coverage and deeper relief, ensuring a highly effective massage session.

The Gintell S5 Pro Massage Chair offers the ultimate premium massage.

It also features Thermal Knee Therapy with intelligent heating airbags that gently compress around the knees and calves, delivering soothing warmth to boost blood circulation, ease joint stiffness and relieve muscle tension. It's the perfect solution for those with chronic knee discomfort or tired, aching legs, especially for elderly users.

With the Gintell Super APPs OS, users can now control the massage chair directly through their smartphone. Users can customise their preferred massage settings, such as the intensity, massage angle or switch programmes with just a few taps.

The S5 Pro Massage Chair incorporates the Magic Touch Reflex. Using synchronised rollers and airbags, these massage rollers target acupressure points on the feet, calves, knees, and legs, providing overall relief of soreness, improving blood circulation, easing muscle tension and enhancing leg mobility.

The AI Voice Control feature allows users to operate the chair with simple voice commands, while the AI VI-Memory system lets them easily customise and set their preferred massage programmes, ready to activate with just one tap whenever they want. This thoughtful, user-friendly design is especially helpful for the elderly, ensuring a truly hassle-free experience.

Featuring built-in surround Bluetooth speakers, it elevates users' relaxation with Brain Relief Therapy sessions. These massage programmes automatically play soothing ambient music to enhance relaxation. Users can also choose to stream their favourite hits and enjoy a deeply immersive, spa-like journey right at home.

Whether you're unwinding after a long day or simply prioritising self-care, the Gintell S5 Pro Massage Chair is your personal wellness companion, offering a luxurious, therapeutic experience at home like never before. Alongside this launch, Gintell is also introducing a limited special edition massage chair – the Gintell Mickey Fantasia Massage Chair, with only 1,000 units available across South-East Asia. Retailing at RM23,988, this exclusive model is a premium investment in long-term health, comfort and overall well-being, available for a limited time during the official launch.

■ Gintell is offering a Merdeka promotion starting from as low as RM1,988. For further enquiries or pre-orders, call 016-7500 998, visit *www.gintell.com* or visit your nearest Gintell showroom to experience the Gintell S5 Pro Massage Chair firsthand.

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