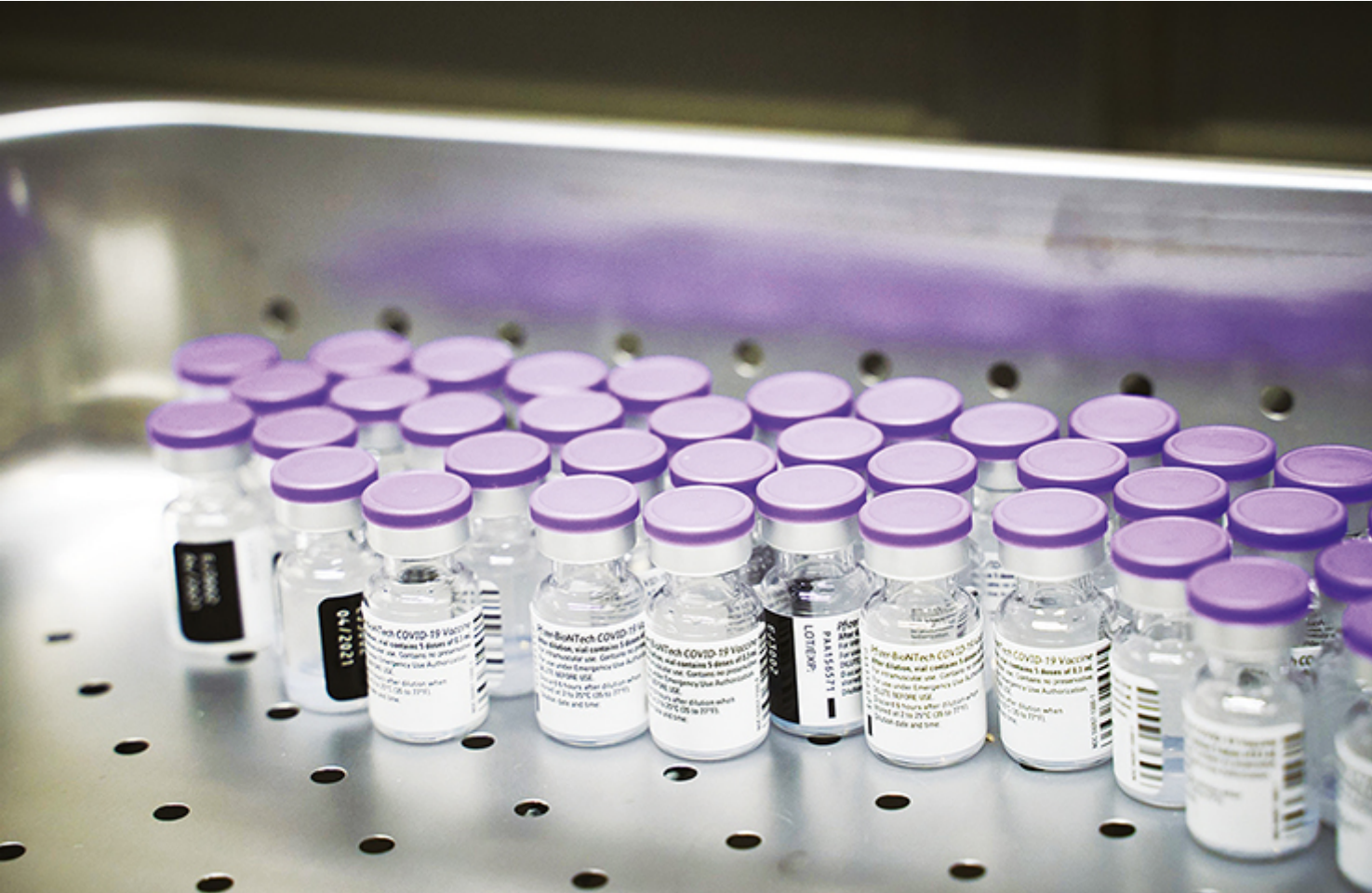


Malaysia's vaccination to proceed as planned



Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at News

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The EU and Belgian ambassadors have assured that Malaysia's vaccine supply agreements will be fulfilled

by RAHIMI YUNUS / pic by BLOOMBERG

MALAYSIA'S vaccination programme will proceed as planned as the country's advanced purchase agreement (APA) on vaccines is not affected under the European Union's (EU) vaccine export controls.



Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar said the EU and Belgian ambassadors have assured that Malaysia's vaccine supply agreements will be fulfilled.

On the Pfizer Inc's vaccine, which is manufactured in Puurs, Belgium, he said Belgian Ambassador to Malaysia Pascal H Grégoire has given his assurance that Malaysia's APA will be fulfilled upon Pfizer applies for export authorisation.

He, who held discussions with the EU Ambassador to Malaysia Michalis Rokas and Grégoire, said the vaccines will be delivered on schedule beginning this month.

He further said the Malaysian government has asked that Pfizer request approval for immediate export approval from the Belgian government.

"With the assurances of both the EU and Belgian ambassadors, the Covid-19 immunisation plan is expected to proceed according to plan," Khairy said in a statement yesterday.



The minister, who is the co-chair of the Special Committee on Ensuring Access To Covid-19 Vaccine Supply, also known as JKJAV, said the first shipment of one million doses of the Pfizer's vaccine, which covers 500,000 people, will be used in the first phase of inoculation for frontliners.

He said the vaccines will be delivered in stages over the first quarter of this year.

In a statement, Rokas said the vaccine export controls are not an export ban, but a transparency and proportionality mechanism over where vaccines made by companies with whom the EU has signed a contract are going.

He said all vaccines purchased in the context of the COVAX scheme are exempted, including those purchased by self-financing participants such as Malaysia.

He further said only vaccines purchased outside the COVAX scheme from producers in the EU for delivery before the end of March 2021 require an export authorisation.

He added that the export authorisations will ensure transparency in a sensitive market and avoid reselling, litigation and trafficking, and they will be conducted in a speedy manner to avoid unnecessary delays.

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"The EU is mindful of advanced purchase authorisations contracted by Malaysia, and will endeavour to ensure that Malaysia's expectations to obtain its deliveries will be met.

"We have made a call on all companies with APAs manufacturing in the EU to honour their obligations to deliver on their commitments," Rokas said in the statement yesterday.

Opposition pact Pakatan Harapan (PH) has expressed grave concern about the potential rise of vaccine nationalism in vaccine-producing countries following the export restrictions on vaccines produced in the EU countries, in which Malaysia was not exempted from the controls.

"We stand united with all developing countries to urge vaccine-producing countries to respect the sanctity of agreements signed between countries and vaccine companies, and not to impose any restrictions on exports.

"In times of global pandemic, all countries must work together to resolve vaccine shortage in the spirit of the brotherhood of humanity, equal opportunities and sanctity of agreements," PH immunisation task force said in a statement yesterday.

The EU's initial export controls on Covid-19 vaccines that the bloc bought in advance, which including Pfizer and AstraZeneca plc vaccines are effective until March 31, 2021.

The task force, which is chaired by former Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, said while the government also has another portfolio of vaccines, including China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd vaccines which have been scheduled for delivery by the first quarter, it has yet to be approved by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA).

The approval by the NPRA normally takes about 60 to 90 days.

Health DG Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah previously said Malaysia is expected to receive the first batch of the Pfizer vaccine on Feb 26.

He said the vaccine will be distributed in stages to the states within a week or two.

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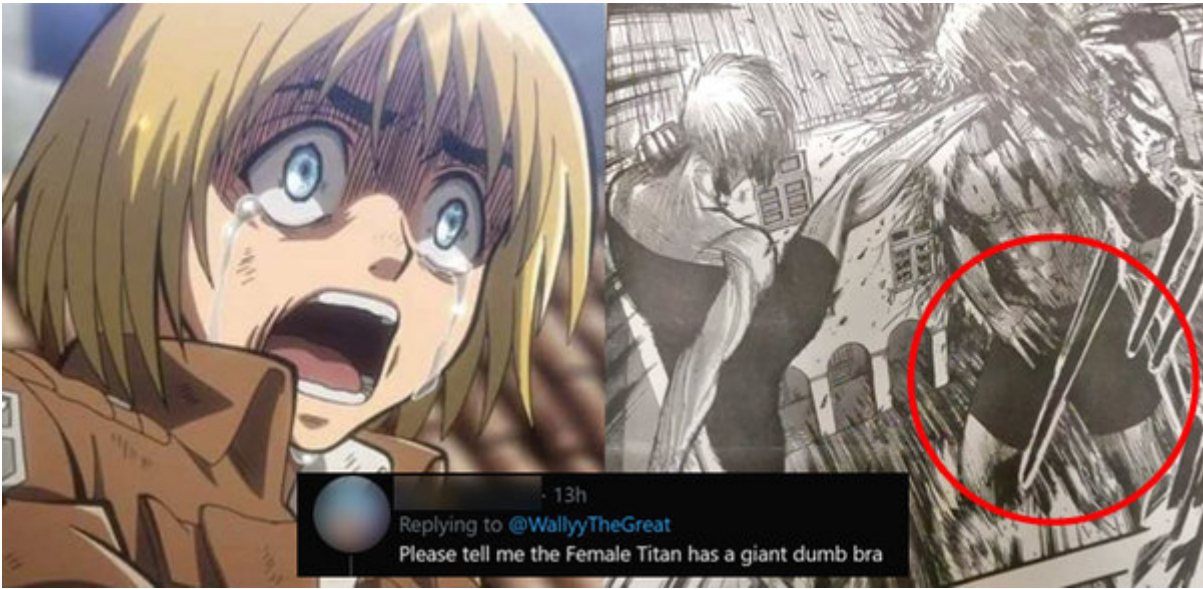
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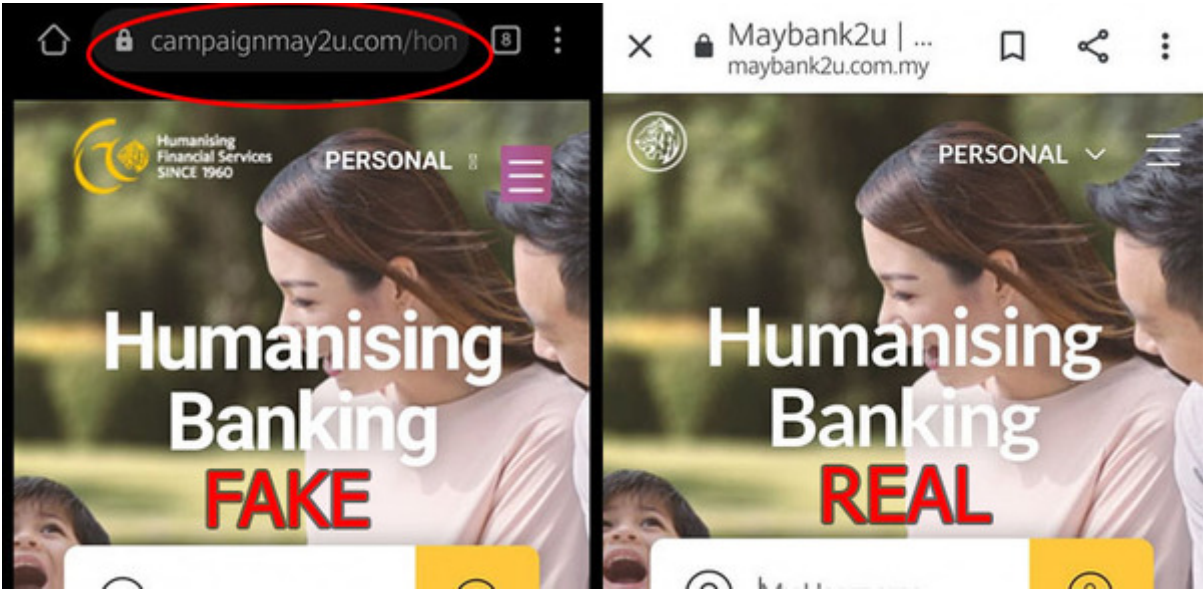
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