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Blockchain technology offers ideal solution

March 25, 2021 @ 12:06am



Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin recently said that there are discussions with China and Singapore for the recognition of our digital certificate. - STR/AZRUL EDHAM MOHD AMINUDDIN

LETTERS: Malaysia has commenced vaccination for frontliners since February this year and soon, we will move into the second phase whereby the high risk will be vaccinated and finally, from August, it will be for the rest of the citizens and other residents in this country.

It is time that we get prepared to create vaccine passports for our citizens who will receive their vaccination soon.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin recently said that there are discussions with China and Singapore for the recognition of our digital certificate.

The vaccine passport should not be limited just to vaccination, but also to the latest Covid-19 test (RTK, PCR or AB) that has been conducted before travel, which gives options to the public and in-bound medical tourist in case they have not been vaccinated.

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Our concerns are on the implementation and recognition of digital vaccination passports for international patients who intend to visit Malaysia for medical tourism, as there have been vaccination programmes in many Asean countries before Malaysia vaccinated their first citizen.

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased attention on maximising our digital potential. The healthcare sector recognises the work needed to establish a digital infrastructure that builds trust in patients, particularly medical tourists, and exemplifies both physical and digital safety.

One of these areas in the digital space is the use of digital vaccination passports which provide proof of vaccination status.

Blockchain technology would be ideal for such a system, especially a decentralised one that provide anonymity, immutability and security.

We propose to the government to begin implementing such a system immediately. We first need universally defined standards for how a digital vaccination passport should work, which can be easily adopted and adapted by other countries. Beginning regionally would be the best option to serve both medical and commercial tourism.

Locally, we need all stakeholders to collaborate. Scalability must also be considered, where data storage is concerned, to accommodate the population of the nation and inbound patients.

The Health Ministry should play a strong role as a regulatory body, especially for determining the authenticity of vaccination information.

Our proposal would be to commence medical tourism in this manner once a large group of citizens have been vaccinated, but not until the end of the vaccination programme.

With this in mind, reimagine a blockchain-enabled Covid-19 registry with the information stored on a distributed ledger system, particularly for Asean.

It acts as the single source of portable and verifiable truth and can be the backbone of other health apps, tools and interventions in development by government and private entities for both local and international patients.

Through the power of data, it can support targeted Covid-19 public health interventions and strategically revive the economy in an informed way.

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The benefits from blockchain technology can help project Malaysia's aspiration to transform our nation into a digitally driven, high-income nation and a regional leader in the digital economy. We could get medical tourism booming again as it was in 2019.

Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh

President, Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Straits Times

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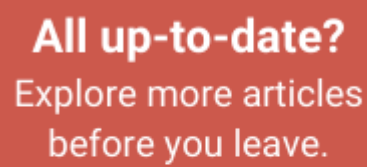
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