



LETTER

LETTER | Herd immunity - let private healthcare help

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[LETTER](#) | When the Covid-19 vaccine arrived on Malaysian shores about two weeks ago, it brought hope and excitement to the rakyat.

We have been battling the pandemic for a year now, and most of us are eager to get vaccinated. Many of us are championing the vaccine, encouraging our friends and relatives to register for the immunisation initiative.

The speed of the rollout, however, could be quicker. We fully comprehend that there are constraints in our public healthcare service, with priority

aptly accorded to healthcare frontliners, school teachers, law enforcement personnel as well as senior citizens.

Yes, we are probably employing the full capacity of our public healthcare service. But we have failed to fully utilise the capacity of our private healthcare service.

At this juncture, selected private hospitals are only used to vaccinate private healthcare workers under Phase One of the vaccination programme.

The Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia has openly appealed to the government to rope them in for the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme.

They have publicly announced that they are willing to procure vaccines from different sources once approvals are given by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA).

There are some 9,000 private clinics and hospitals nationwide, and this would alleviate the pressure on the public healthcare system. Furthermore, every patient vaccinated in the private sector is one patient less that the government has to pay for.

However, the private healthcare operators have been largely side-lined in the national immunisation programme thus far with Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin recently confirming that there would be no immediate provision for private hospitals to purchase vaccines and run vaccination programmes.

By overlooking the private healthcare system, we are effectively slowing down the race towards achieving herd immunity.

Economic generators and wealth creators of society, such as business leaders, entrepreneurs and professionals as well as employees in essential businesses and services should be provided with an option to access vaccination earlier, at their own cost.

We urge the government to immediately relook into tapping the resources of the private healthcare system, without affecting the supply of vaccine already procured for public healthcare.

By going full throttle on both fronts, we can leverage the full capacity of our healthcare system and achieve herd immunity much quicker.

In upholding the values of transparency and public accountability, we also urge the government to fully disclose its strategy in the immunisation programme, as well as a periodical progress report of the vaccination efforts across the country.

It may take a couple of months for the shortage of vaccines to be addressed globally, but we need to be prepared with a cohesive plan once the vaccine supply chain has caught up.

The writer is co-president of the Centre for A Better Tomorrow (Cenbet), an MCA-linked civil society organisation promoting moderation and good governance.

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