

# Decision on AstraZeneca on April 6



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**NATION**

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ISKANDAR PUTERI: Malaysia will make a decision on the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine tomorrow (April 6), but says it has a back-up plan in case it needs to defer its use.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said the Special Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee Committee would decide on the use of the vaccine.

“We will receive reports from a group of experts on the latest developments related to the vaccine as there are several cases being reported by the media, as well as those from Britain’s regulatory body on blood clots. We will look at the data available.



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Mentri Besar Datuk Hasni Mohammad at Kota Iskandar here yesterday. The government, Khairy added, had ordered about 6.4 million doses of AstraZeneca with another 1.4 million doses through the Covax facility, which should be delivered in May.

Covax, or Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access, is a global initiative aimed at providing equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

Should the committee decide that the AstraZeneca vaccine is not suitable for use in Malaysia, Khairy said the ministry already had several back-up plans in place.

“We have received an offer from Pfizer to increase its Pfizer-BioNTech doses to 12.8 million more than what we have ordered from them, which stands at 30 million doses,” he said.

On Friday, the Drug Control Authority under the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) gave conditional approval for the AstraZeneca vaccine supplied through the Covax facility and produced by SK Bioscience Co Ltd in South Korea.

It also gave its conditional approval on March 2 to the vaccine procured directly from the manufacturer in Thailand.

Several countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia and South Korea, have decided to resume the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, albeit with restrictions for certain age groups.

Meanwhile, Khairy said the ministry was also updating its data on the effectiveness of several vaccine brands as part of Malaysia’s preparations to face an aggressive Covid-19 variant, including one from South Africa that was recently found in the country.

“Among the brands reported to be effective against such variants are those from Pfizer, Novavax as well as Johnson & Johnson.

“We are concerned about the possibility of the Covid-19 virus mutating, which would force people to take vaccine jabs on a yearly basis,” he said, adding that as of Saturday, about 7.8 million people had registered for the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme.

Sabah and Kelantan had the lowest rate of registration at 11% and 17% respectively, while Putrajaya had the highest at 88%, followed by Selangor (44%), Penang (39%) and Johor (35%).

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