

# AstraZeneca no more an opt-in

By **Nicholas Chung** - May 27, 2021 5:22 PM

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*The rush for the AstraZeneca vaccine is an indication that there is no more hesitancy about the vaccine, says Khairy Jamaluddin. (Bernama pic)*

PETALING JAYA: The next batch of AstraZeneca vaccines will no longer be available on an opt-in, voluntary basis but will be reincorporated back into the mainstream of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (PICK).

Science, technology and innovation minister Khairy Jamaluddin announced this in a press conference today, saying the great response to the AstraZeneca jabs was proof that there was no longer any hesitancy among the community about the vaccine.

He also apologised over the chaotic registration process for the second batch of the vaccine yesterday, saying a probe was underway over the technical issues.

Khairy also said the ministry was looking at adding a feature to MySejahtera to allow the public to choose what vaccine they want to get under PICK.

"The decision to have an opt-in stream was made in view of hesitancy among the community about the AstraZeneca vaccine, because of news linking the jabs to blood clots.

"But with the good reception for the opt-in stream, the hesitancy level has diminished and now the AstraZeneca jabs are well-received by the community."

He said it would be cleaner and more convenient to do everything through the MySejahtera app, adding that the feature could allow users to choose their preferred date, time and place too.

"We want to make the process as easy as possible so we're working on a few options. We will announce this in the next couple of weeks," he said.

"But we're taking the opt-in option (for AstraZeneca) off the table. There are only so many days of heart attacks that I can endure," he quipped.

In acknowledging that the registration process yesterday could have been much better, he said the government's modernisation and management planning unit (MAMPU) would also be looking into the matter.

But he said the ministry did not spend RM70 million on the website, clarifying that the funds cover a range of things.

He said the RM70 million allocated by the government for data integration and the appointment-making system was a ceiling price for several systems. While unsure how much has been spent so far, he assured that the ministry has not reached the ceiling.

Meanwhile, Khairy said he was informed that some organisations performed mass bookings for the AstraZeneca vaccine for individuals, adding that this might have even been done without the individuals' consent.

He said this in explaining why some users had their appointments changed to another date and also for the AstraZeneca vaccine, when they did not attempt to book themselves for the opt-in jab.

"That's the only possible explanation for this right now," he said, adding that the changing of appointments and vaccination streams should not have happened.

He also rubbished claims that Muslims and non-Muslims were segregated at the Kompleks Sukan Desa Tasik vaccination centre, saying this was an irresponsible allegation that had no basis whatsoever.

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