

Open vaccination for economic frontliners



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by **RAHIMI YUNUS** / pic by **AFP**

PRIVATE hospitals urge the government to allow individuals to **pay for their Covid-19 vaccination** as an alternative method running parallel with the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP).

Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia president Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh said their members had received many inquiries from multinational corporations and government-linked companies in getting their staff vaccinated.

He said these organisations want to prevent disruptions to their business operations should one of the staff get infected with Covid-19.

“These corporations want their employees to be considered as economic frontline workers. Many of them involve in the production, manufacturing, travel and airline industries,” Dr Kuljit told *The Malaysian Reserve (TMR)*.

He said the younger populations of the economic frontline workers will receive their vaccination by year-end should the NIP phases be followed accordingly.

He said companies are willing to pay for the vaccines for their staff to ensure their businesses are running smoothly.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar previously said individuals may be allowed to pay for vaccination at private hospitals starting the second half of the year.

He said the government will allow private healthcare providers to open negotiations to procure vaccines.

Yesterday, the government has opened the registration for AstraZeneca vaccination that will be given based on first come, first served basis to voluntary applicants. First appointments will be on Wednesday.



Meanwhile, Dr Kuljit said the government had not yet decided to allow individuals to pay for vaccines at private centres.

He said the government is concerned about vaccine shortage for the public if the private medical sector is allowed to procure vaccines and offer vaccinations.

“Our justification is we can get more people vaccinated, and the companies will pay them (the vaccinations). Such a programme would strike a balance with the NIP.

There should not be any worries about running out of vaccines for the public,” he said.

Besides, for those whose employers would cover for the vaccination, Dr Kuljit said there would be walk-ins, but this group would be smaller compared to the corporates.

For now, he said private hospitals are ready to procure vaccines.

At the same time, they are prepared to partake in the NIP to administer the injection to help the government in the rollout.

The government has allowed private hospitals to serve as vaccination centres in the NIP Phases 2 and 3 to cover a wider population.

The government will give free vaccines to private hospitals to widen access.

Malaysian Public Health Physicians’ Association president Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said it is good to allow individuals to pay for their Covid-19 vaccine.

Still, he said the supply should not come from the existing system.

He also said such alternative vaccination channel should prioritise those in need and not those already on the NIP list.

Khairy recently denied he ordered vaccinations for a group of Genting Group workers. He said vaccine recipients under the NIP Phase 1 were based on the guidelines issued by the Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee Special Committee on March 1, 2021.

He said, in Phase 1, state’s Covid-19 Immunisation Task Force managed vaccination appointments according to the list provided at the state level.

The minister added that some states assumed that they could start giving vaccinations to recipients from other groups once they have completed inoculating recipients under the first phase.



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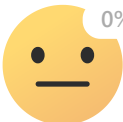
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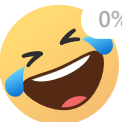
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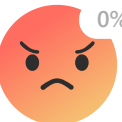
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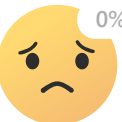
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