

# Phase 3 vaccination programme delayed



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**Khairy says slow rollout of vaccines in Malaysia set to change by June as developed countries would almost be done with their inoculations**

by ASILA JALIL / pic by MUHD AMIN NAHARUL

PHASE 3 of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) may not take off this month due to vaccine supply issues, said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar.

Saying that the current Phase 2 is running smoothly, Khairy added that priorities given to developed countries by pharmaceutical companies is causing delay for Malaysians to get vaccinated.

“Phase 2 is ongoing. Phase 3 is supposed to start in May, but I don’t know if we have enough supplies. We need to make an announcement on that,” he said at a press conference at the World Trade Centre (WTC) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

“Of course as a developing country, we are extremely dissatisfied with the distribution of vaccines around the world. You can see like for Malaysia, it is not because of the inefficiency of our vaccination programme, we turned this around in 48 hours, we made appointments for more than 260,000 people.

“It is not that we cannot do it fast, but it is because the supply of vaccines is slow simply because pharmaceutical companies prioritise rich countries and give deals to rich countries which are not on offer for developing countries.”

He said the slow rollout of vaccines in Malaysia is set to change by June this year as the developed countries would have inoculated most of their citizens by then.

“I think it is something that the international community will have to continue to discuss, not just in terms of managing Covid-19, but in terms of future pandemic management. How these much needed, much sought-after vaccines have essentially been monopolised by western countries,” said the minister.

Those residing in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur were given the option to voluntarily sign up for the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine after reports over its safety and efficacy surfaced globally.

All of the 268,800 available slots for the vaccine were taken up in less than three hours after it was open for registration on Sunday.



Besides WTC, the other two designated vaccine administration centres (PPV) operational yesterday were University of Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

There were 2,468 appointments made at the WTC, while UM and UKM had 996 and 928 appointments respectively.

Nabil Jamil, an AZ recipient at WTC, said the vaccination process went smoothly and he did not have to wait long to receive the jab.

The 22-year-old admitted he had several concerns regarding the vaccine after reading reports on its side effects and efficacy online, but that did not deter him from registering for the voluntary programme.

“My dad received the vaccine as well and he is fine, so I know it should be fine for me despite the news. The injection was relatively painless and my arm does not feel sore.”

Although he lauded the government’s move to allow voluntary registration, Nabil said the same procedure should not be applied for other vaccines as there are several groups of people that should be prioritised.

“For AZ, it makes sense to take it voluntarily as long as the public knows about the possible side effects, but to reach herd immunity, the government cannot administer the vaccine on a voluntary basis.”

Meanwhile, 66-year-old Ek Cheah urged the public to get the AZ vaccine regardless of the negative reports that have been circulating online.

He said the registration and overall process at the PPV was very organised and accommodative, despite the large number of people present.

“I think for those who have not registered, they should take the opportunity and do so whether it is for AZ vaccine or others. The public should do it right now and get vaccinated, do not wait.”

A number of recipients have also posted their vaccination process online and used the #CucukMYAZ hashtag to provide information to the public from various PPVs.

A Twitter user named Leesh live tweeted his experience and said a lot of people came early ahead of their scheduled appointment.

Despite it being the first day of the programme, he said there were no hiccups during the process and the longest wait he had to endure was only for 30 minutes while at the waiting area at Station 1.

Among the side effects he experienced were soreness in the first two hours after vaccination, as well as a mild headache.

“Five hours after my AZ jab, the headache has completely gone away. The slight tiredness earlier has also gone away. I am feeling fine now,” he tweeted.



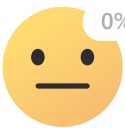


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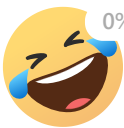
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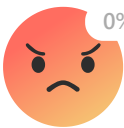
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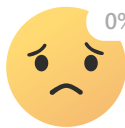
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