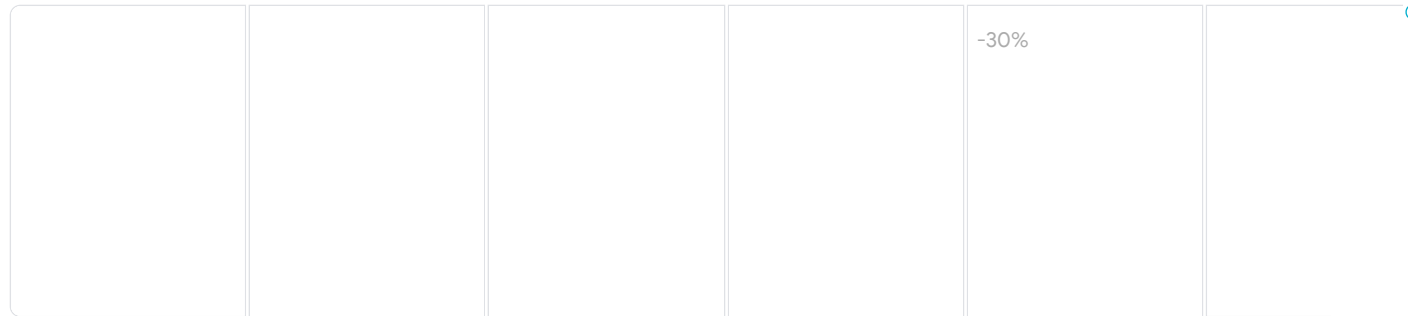




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MMA ticks off Khairy for not engaging GPs on their involvement in the immunisation programme

BY SAM CHUA ON JUNE 2, 2021, WEDNESDAY AT 7:01 AM

SARAWAK

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Prof Datuk Dr Subramanian Muniandy

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KUCHING (June 2): Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) takes to task National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) Coordinating Minister Khairy Jamaluddin for not engaging private general practitioners (GPs) on their involvement in the programme.

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MMA president Professor Dato Dr Subramaniam Muniandy said in a statement yesterday the association had officially written to the minister on March 2 to meet on plans for private GPs to be involved in the NIP but his office had not replied to the proposal.

He pointed out there was also no official communication from the Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee Special Committee (JKJAV) on the matter until now and the minister concerned had shown no interest in engaging with the GPs.

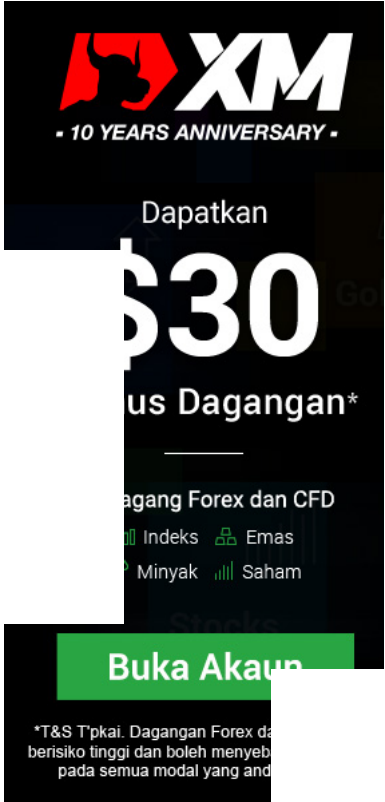
“The minister should have come down from his high horse to meet with us months ago when we wrote to him. Perhaps that would have encouraged more GPs to get on board. What a difference it would have made if he showed some interest,” said Dr Subramaniam.

It was previously reported that only about 2,500 private GPs have signed up for the vaccination exercise.

Dr Subramaniam said Khairy held a Zoom session with the media every other day but did not bother to have a Zoom session with the 8,000 GPs in the country.

“Only now when cases of Covid-19 and deaths have skyrocketed, there is talk of GPs. Where was the Ministry of Health and JKJAV months ago? Or are we keeping to tradition of waiting for things to get worse before something is done?”

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He said most of the 2,500 private GPs had undergone training by the Ministry of Health for the vaccination exercise by the end of April and they were ready to begin vaccinating in early May, the targeted timeline for the programme to be rolled out.

“However, they were left hanging. The GPs have been waiting for the go-ahead from government. Was the NIP coordinating minister aware of this? If he was...why the delay?”

Moreover, Dr Subramaniam said it was widely publicised that 75,000 vaccinations could be carried out per day even with 2,500 GPs.

“If he is indeed aware, then as the minister in charge of the NIP, he should be bugging the GPs night and day if the programme was not moving along, knowing they are the best, easiest option and most readily available resource to carry out vaccinations as proven in programmes run in other countries.”

The MMA president wondered why Khairy did not engage with private GPs, who could assist immensely in doubling or tripling the vaccination rate, when the NIP progress was bombarded for being slow.

“For months, there have been calls for private healthcare participation in the NIP but the government has been dragging their feet. A good leader is one who has his finger on the pulse of the rakyat and understands their needs.”

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"As can clearly be seen now, many members of the public prefer to go to their good ol' private GP down the road to get their jab. As a minister serving the people, he should do all he can to make that happen and as quickly as possible."

Dr Subramaniam added that the government's failure to listen had contributed to the failure of the previous Movement Control Order (MCOs) in bringing the pandemic under control in the country.

"There is a lot of talk from them but no listening. Policies are decided in silo, with hardly any engagement with stakeholders. This has been the story since day one of the pandemic."

"How can there be any hope of success in managing the pandemic when the government is keeping to themselves and even turning away help? In this case, the private GPs have not been consulted even when the vaccination programme involves them!"

Dr Subramaniam said the training required for the vaccinations was mostly on cold chain requirements for the vaccines storage and on administrative procedures, and not really involving anything technical and scientific.

He said the training was done online and it only took about two to three hours to complete, while the usage of the 'special' syringe for the vaccination was not complicated.

"If the minister is aware that there is too much red tape in the way of the programme with private clinics, then as the NIP coordinating minister, he should do something about it.

"We only want things to work because like the minister as well as all Malaysians, want the NIP to be a great success so that the country can recover from this nightmare of a pandemic as quickly as possible," said Dr Subramaniam.



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