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An open letter to YB Khairy Jamaluddin — Angeline Lim

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JUNE 13 — Dear YB Khairy, Co-ordinating Minister for the Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme (NIP),

Congratulations on pushing the daily vaccination numbers above 150,000! We look forward now to seeing the rate consistently maintained and steadily increased, until it hits the target of 300,000 doses by August as promised.

YB, I am glad that you were selected from the 70-member Cabinet to be in charge of NIP. I want nothing more than to see the programme successfully concluded by the end of 2021, as promised by our prime minister.

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I believe you have a good grasp of the many issues compounding your task, and you are surely cognizant of the high stakes involved.

Currently, Malaysia’s 7-day average for Covid-19 deaths is above 90 per day. That’s one Covid death every 15 minutes. At that rate, nearly 700 lives would be lost in a week, 2,800 lives in a month.

Speedy roll-out of mass vaccinations is critical. Millions of Malaysian lives are in your hands.



Khairy Jamaluddin at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre vaccination centre in Kuala Lumpur, June 7, 2021. — Bernama pic

YB, there is no denying that you are working tirelessly at your assignment. In order for your efforts to be more impactful, allow me to make two simple suggestions.

First, be transparent. Currently, figures related to NIP seem to be announced in a random fashion. It would help us greatly to have all the information organised systematically and presented clearly with daily updates, similar to the KKM’s effective graphics for Covid-19 new cases, active cases, recoveries and deaths.

We would like to see released on a daily basis, figures for vaccinations per day, a rolling 7-day average figure, registrations for vaccination to date, and how far more we have to go before the target for herd immunity is achieved.

Equally important are current daily figures for vaccine supplies and distribution to the different states. Going by announcements you have made, it would appear that vaccine stocks are mostly arriving in the next quarter. That is cold comfort, when assurance is needed right now that there are sufficient supplies.

With greater transparency, I believe that gaps can be identified quickly and resources mobilised immediately to close them. Surely that is the desire of all parties on whichever side of the political divide, since it is to everyone’s benefit that NIP is completed in the shortest time possible.

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ordination between government departments and ministries.

And so we witness countless policy flip-flops and contradictory actions, including plans for a swoop on illegals precisely at the time that undocumented immigrants are urged to step forward for vaccination.

YB, I realise that not all matters in pandemic management are within your purview. But for those that are related to NIP, please engage with your counterparts to ensure that all directives are fully aligned.

The rakyat need to know that our leaders are working in synchrony, in order for the trust deficit to be narrowed.

Beyond a cohesive government, we urgently need a whole-of-society approach. There has been an outpouring of views from all quarters of society, including professional bodies, medical associations and chambers of commerce, offering excellent proposals to move NIP forward.

YB, I urge you to engage with the private sector and join forces with them in this battle. The government cannot go it alone.

We have heard proposals, for instance, to increase the number of private GPs enlisted in the vaccination programme. So far, 2,500 GPs have signed up. Please work with the medical associations to reduce red tape in order to get the rest to join in.

We look forward eagerly to seeing 500 private GPs begin vaccinating by mid-June, and 1,000 by end-June, as you announced. Even more so, we hope to see all 7,000 private GPs fully onboard soon in rolling out NIP.

The MMA has also called for walk-in vaccinations, particularly for those above age 60. Sarawak has already embarked on walk-ins, demonstrating that it is possible to sidestep the mySejahtera bottleneck for vaccination appointments.

I applaud Sarawak’s initiative and urge that other states be allowed to follow suit.

YB, I believe that with greater transparency and engagement, we can do much better. Amid many troubles that beleaguer the nation, including political storms that may be brewing, I sincerely hope that you will stay laser-focused on your mission. Many lives hang in the balance, hinged on your success.

*** This is the personal opinion of the writer and does not necessarily represent the views of *Malay Mail*.**

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