



OPINIONS

MP SPEAKS | Don't ostracise the opposition in war against Covid-19

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MP SPEAKS | The country is going through an unprecedented challenge in history. A total of 3,968 people have lost their lives since the start of the pandemic. After more than two weeks of full lockdown, the number of confirmed cases has remained at 4,949, with four deaths in every hour.

According to the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme Coordinating Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, Malaysia would achieve herd immunity by year-end with 80 percent of the population fully vaccinated, that is, if everything goes smoothly.

To date, barely eight percent of the population has been vaccinated and only 60 percent of those aged 18 and above have registered for vaccination. Judging by this rate, it will probably take more than a year to achieve herd immunity. Hence, we must be prepared to mobilise the whole nation to fight it out in this prolonged war against the virus.

Yet, I can't help feeling angry and frustrated that when the country needs a united front to fight the pandemic, the legitimately elected representatives of the rakyat are prevented from playing a more meaningful role. The Perikatan Nasional government pronounced the state of emergency and suspended the Parliament, thus preventing the opposition from giving useful suggestions and scrutinising expenses.

Back to the constituencies, the opposition representatives have been barred from attending all meetings and activities related to the pandemic. Neither have they been given any access to information. What is the rationale for all these? Are they afraid that the opposition might outperform them?

The registration of vaccination is behind schedule. But the only counteract measure the PN government can think of is to set a deadline for the registration. What is the government going to do with those who have not registered before the deadline? Stop them from getting vaccinated? Throw them in jail? Or the usual way of punishing them with a hefty fine?

To get everyone to register and to go for vaccination on the designated date, one cannot just rely on media publicity or press releases by the prime minister and a few ministers.

On the ground, there is no organised team to canvass, mobilise, and assist them in the registration as well as to bring them out for vaccination. How can one expect a prompt response from the public and effective registration and vaccination?

Why didn't they allow the representatives who are trusted by the people and who are familiar with the situation on the ground to help mobilise

their constituents in the registration and vaccination?

Before achieving herd immunity, an urgent task is to cut off the infection chain. MPs from the Federal Territory have repeatedly urged the government and the Kuala Lumpur City Hall to conduct full screening for all KL residents. But until today, the government has been evasive to respond to our request.

My service centre has been receiving many vaccination-related enquiries and suggestions. How can the MPs act effectively as a bridge between the government and the rakyat when PN continues to ostracise the opposition?

There is no two-way communication between the administration and the people. All decisions are top-down. The prime minister and his cabinet make all the decisions, announce them and expect results. It is always the fault of the people should their decisions fail to achieve the goal. It is understandable for the voice of the people is the last thing they want to hear.

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