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Diversifying vaccine portfolio expedites country's rate of vaccination

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Khairy Jamaluddin said the national vaccination rate is high if compared with South Korea and Australia. — Picture by Miera Zulyana

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PUTRAJAYA, July 25 — The government's decision in diversifying the vaccine portfolio under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (PICK) has succeeded in raising the country's rate of vaccination which propelled Malaysia as among the fastest in the world, said PICK Coordinating Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

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“Earlier some said Malaysia was slow in joining Covax and why didn’t we put all (portfolio of vaccines) under Covax. So far we have only received 828,000 doses of vaccine compared to a total of 6.4 million doses allocated under Covax.

“If I had placed the full portfolio of vaccines under Covax...we will face difficulties, so this is the reason why we diversify the procurement of vaccines,” he said in a virtual interview recently.

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The portfolio of Covid-19 vaccines used under PICK were Pfizer-BioNTech, Sinovac and CanSino which were procured from the manufacturers while AstraZeneca was acquired from United Nations vaccine facility, Covax as well as the manufacturer.

As at July 21, Malaysia had received 21,556,750 doses of vaccines comprising Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca as well as Sinovac for usage under PICK and from the total 16,024,916 doses of vaccines had been dispensed throughout the country, he said.

“I hope we could maintain the existing momentum for us to achieve the target of vaccinating all adults in Malaysia by October or November,” he said.

Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had earlier said 100 per cent of the adult population in Malaysia was expected to complete two doses of Covid-19 vaccine in October as the achievement of the country’s vaccination programme target has been expedited.

He said the move to speed up the vaccination programme included raising the capacity to reach 500,000 doses of vaccine a day followed the discovery of the new Covid-19 variant which was more aggressive and positive cases had started to spike.

On the sale of Covid-19 vaccine by the private sector, Khairy said the initiative could also increase the country vaccination rate and guidelines on the matter are being studied.

“Malaysia has bought adequate supply of vaccines for PICK, for those who want the vaccine fast, they can go to the private sector then.

“If one wants Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, one has to wait via PICK as the supply is according to a set schedule. We have also urged the manufacturer to meet the stipulated delivery schedule,” he said.

On Friday, Khairy said the ceiling price and guidelines for selling Sinovac vaccine by the private sector will be decided in August. — Bernama

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