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Abang Johari: Sarawak Infectious Disease Centre to conduct study on those fully vaccinated against Covid-19

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BY SULOK TAWIE



Abang Johari said the initiative may also lead to a potential spin-off in the development of diagnostics kits and an antibody drug against Covid-19. — Bernama pic

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KOTA SAMARAHAN, July 26 — Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Openg today said the Sarawak Infectious Disease Centre (SIDC) will undertake a longitudinal serology study on vaccinated individuals in Kuching as its immediate project.

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He said the study will monitor the specific neutralising antibodies against Covid-19 over a two-year period.

“Such information is not only important for us to determine the efficacy of the current vaccination programme but also will allow us to make an informed decision on the need for booster doses, and the type of vaccines to be given,” he said during the soft launch of the SIDC and Sarawak Research and Development Centre (SRDC) here.

Abang Johari said the initiative may also lead to a potential spin-off in the development of diagnostics kits and an antibody drug against Covid-19, adding this is a collaboration between SIDC and the Institute of Health and Community Medicine of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

He said the state government has allocated RM200 million for this internationally accredited centre, adding: “I have discussed with the federal Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Khairy Jamaluddin and Tan Sri Jemilah Mahmood, the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister, on this centre and it can be an important research centre in Malaysia.

“I hope the scientists will do their part,” he said.

The chief minister said SIDC’s mission is to ensure that Sarawak is better equipped to create global, and equitable science-driven solutions to prepare for, identify, and counter future pandemic threats.

“We are looking forward to the support of all Sarawakians, the relevant agencies and ministries both at state and federal level, and the research community in our endeavours to fulfil this mission,” he added.

He added the pandemic over these two years, and the challenges it brought has taught the state government of the need to be prepared for future outbreaks.

Abang Johari said the centre, which was approved by the Sarawak State Cabinet in February this year, is a research facility under the purview of the Sarawak Research and Development Council (SRDC).

He said its goals are to protect Sarawak by improving research in infectious disease, equip Sarawak with the capability and capacity to test medication, vaccines and equipment against infectious agents and enable Sarawak to detect, diagnose and predict potential infectious disease outbreaks.

“It will also complement and collaborate with the Ministry of Health in tackling infectious diseases in Sarawak.

“The centre will be equipped with Bio-Safety Level 3 (BSL-3) laboratories to allow research and development on BSL-3 infectious agents, and

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“It will also provide opportunities for Sarawakians to serve Sarawak and drive human capital development in biomedical sciences,” he said, adding that the research facilities available will bring together talents regionally and internationally, and attract global biomedical companies to ensure Sarawak is prepared for future challenges.

The chief minister also said the centre will focus on developing the capacity and knowledge to respond to future pandemics and emerging threats, through human capital development and impactful research and translating biomedical research into applications such as diagnostics tools, vaccines treatments, and vaccines.

“The launch of the centre today is our commitment to contribute to handling the Covid19 situation in Sarawak through targeted research,” he added.

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