

Saifuddin: NPRA red tape caused delay in vaccine procurement

**NATION**

Thursday, 29 Jul 2021

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THE initial delay in the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) over the procurement of vaccines was caused by unnecessary red tape by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA), says Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail (PH-Kulim Bandar Bharu).

He said Malaysia had missed out on a golden opportunity to procure vaccines internationally last year, and pointed out that countries such as Singapore and the United States had approved the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine as early as December.

“The NPRA previously said it required 90 to 120 days and it was approved in February this year. In December last year, Singapore became the first country in Asia to procure the vaccine.

“We were slow,” Saifuddin said in debating the briefing by Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin on the NIP.

Saifuddin said the delay in procuring vaccines had led to spikes in Covid-19 cases, adding that the government then adopted a “wait-and-see”

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“When there is fierce competition and we don’t have strong bargaining power, other countries made procurement commitments and they are negotiating for the earliest possible delivery dates to save lives.

“But here, we said wait for the NPRA. That is the bottleneck,” the MP said.

Saifuddin acknowledged the importance of the whole-of-society approach taken by the Federal Government, where the views of stakeholders were taken into account in the country’s battle against Covid-19.

“Engagement with every stakeholder is vital in facing this pandemic,” he said.

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