

Court action sought to stop vaccination of under 18s

By **FMT Reporters** - September 13, 2021 11:04 PM

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Form 4 and Form 5 pupils of Batu Lintang secondary school in Kuching waiting for their vaccination jabs on Sept 10. (Bernama pic)

GEORGE TOWN: A court action has been filed against the government which seeks to stop the vaccination of children under 18, pending the results of clinical trials on the controversial anti-parasitic drug Ivermectin which is used for humans and livestock.

An application for a judicial review was filed at the High Court here on Aug 30, on behalf of 18 children in Penang island, who are represented in the suit by their parents.

Judicial Commissioner Wong Hock Chong has set Oct 4 for submissions from the government, and the application for leave to apply for judicial review will be heard on Oct 15.

The suit names the government, health minister, health director-general, and the science, technology and innovation minister as respondents.

The parents are named in the suit but their identities are being withheld to protect the privacy of the children, who are minors and cannot sue on their own behalf.

Vaccination of children aged 12 to 17 who have underlying medical conditions are to begin this month, followed by healthy adolescents. Vaccination of children under 18 has already begun in Sarawak.

The suit alleges that the government's decision to vaccinate adolescents had been carried out without full studies on the effects on young children.

Lead counsel for the applicants, Lee Khai, said vaccination was a personal choice. He said the vaccines now being used had only received conditional approval by the authorities.

Among the other measures sought in the suit are an order for the government to withdraw the conditional registration of the vaccines if the drug Ivermectin is proven to be effective.

Ivermectin has been the subject of worldwide controversy for Covid-19 treatment. It is touted as a so-called "miracle drug" by anti-vaccination activists and advocacy groups.

However, health authorities in Malaysia, the US and other countries, and the drug's manufacturers have stated that there is no proof for Ivermectin's use as a treatment for Covid-19.

The drug is currently the subject of clinical trials being conducted by the health ministry.

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