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High marks for MOH

The Star, Malaysia



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Ministry lauded for immunisation drive

PETALING JAYA: In gauging the Health Ministry's performance in the past 100 days, medical associations say it has done well with the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

The ministry's promptness in addressing issues and facilitating public-private partnership (PPP) were also acknowledged.

But they also urged the ministry to tackle the issue of contract doctors and pharmacists, among others.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai said the ministry had ensured a high national vaccination rate with 97% adults and 87% adolescents being fully vaccinated.

"This would perhaps be the most notable KPI (key performance indicator) achievement," he said when contacted yesterday.

He said the ministry had also been transparent in the reporting of the Covid-19 situation in the country.

"The ministry should also be commended for its strict policies and SOP for the Melaka election, which we believe was necessary in preventing another surge in cases.

"The ministry under Minister Khairy Jamaluddin's leadership has also been instrumental in the reopening of travel between Malaysia and Singapore.

"Both governments have worked well together in enabling the launch of the VTL (Vaccination Travel Lane) with sufficient Covid-19 preventive measures in place for travellers

from both countries," said Dr Koh.

He said the country was quick to update its Covid-19 testing requirements for international and local travellers as a precautionary measure against the Omicron variant.

However, he said he believed that the ministry could put in more effort into vaccinating undocumented migrants, adding that he was also disappointed that the issue of contract doctors remained unresolved.

"This will require an inter-ministerial effort involving mainly the Finance Ministry, through budgeting for permanent positions to be created as well as longer contract extensions to enable junior doctors to specialise," said Dr Koh.

The smooth rollout of adolescent vaccination was also commended by Malaysian Pharmacists Society (MPS) president Amrahi Buang.

He also praised the communication skills of Khairy in promoting vaccine advocacy and for the ministry's actions on the Ivermectin issue.

He added that there had been transparency on the reporting of adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) but believed it could be further improved, including in terms of Covid-19 data analysis.

However, Amrahi said the ministry failed to safeguard Covid-19 self-test kits under the Medical Device Act, adding that the Medical Device Authority had been weak in its enforcement and allowed sales by non-medical premises.

He also cited the failure of the ministry to include community pharmacists to conduct booster shot vaccinations as well as not listing MPS as one of the NGOs for mental health issues despite community pharmacists being the most accessible healthcare provider.

"Regarding contract pharmacists, there should be more clarity on the grade entitlement as well as a proper long-term plan to address this issue. MPS has never been invited to discuss this issue with the authorities.

"MPS was also not invited as a stakeholder on a Cost Benefit Analysis organised by the industry under the purview of the Malaysian Productivity Centre regarding medicine price controls," Amrahi said.

Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia president Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh said Khairy had augmented and further refined what was already done by the previous administration with his experience in the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry.

He said the minister was instrumental in facilitating the PPP which helped Malaysians who were waiting for treatment in government hospitals during the pandemic.

"Under this initiative, we were able to see a lot of public (non-Covid-19) patients in which the government then was able to treat the Covid-19 patients," he said, adding that this initiative could continue on a case-by-case basis.



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SUMMARIES

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