

Health DG assures only safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines will be used

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COVID-19 | Any Covid-19 vaccine used in Malaysia will first need to be proven safe and effective, assured Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah today.

The vaccine will then be prioritised for high-risk groups and monitored for any side effects.

It will also be assessed for its ability to generate herd immunity against the virus.

The top official explained today that Malaysia had embarked on vaccine agreements ahead of any of them getting approved as a “proactive and pre-emptive” step.

“Once a vaccine is registered with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for example, demand will rise and we might get left behind,” he said.

“Whatever happens, the caveat is the vaccine must be effective and safe for use. We will look at whether it has been approved by the FDA and Malaysian National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (before using it),” he stressed during a press conference in Putrajaya today.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced that Putrajaya had signed an agreement with US pharmaceutical company Pfizer to procure 12.8 million doses of its yet-to-be-approved Covid-19 vaccine.

This evening, Noor Hisham assured that the agreement was inked following “detailed discussions” covering the logistics needed to transport the vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine needs to be stored at -70°C.

“The negotiation was not just (about) the purchasing but also in terms of the transport, logistics and storage et cetera. Because you need an ultra-cold (supply) chain.

“It is inclusive in the terms of the negotiations with the company,” he said.

Questioned if Pfizer will be providing the ultra-cold storage conditions needed by the vaccine, Noor Hisham did not specify.

“(We had) a comprehensive discussion in terms of the whole supply chain. From production to delivery. Door-to-door,” he repeated.

Aside from Pfizer, Malaysia has also inked access agreements to Covid-19 vaccines from China, Russia and the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Covid-19 vaccine global access facility (Covax).

Malaysia has budgeted RM3 billion in Budget 2021 to procure Covid-19 vaccines.

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