

PM: VACCINES FOR 80PC OF POPULATION

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NST- 23/12/2020

Deals with Russia and China will add value to science and technology sector, with R&D benefits

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THE government is on track to secure Covid-19 vaccines for more than 80 per cent of the population at a total cost of RM2 billion.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, in announcing this in a televised address yesterday, said the government had inked an agreement with AstraZeneca, a research-based biopharmaceutical company, to secure 6.4 million doses or 10 per cent more Covid-19 vaccines.

"This means a guarantee of 40 per cent supply of vaccines have been secured via agreements with the Covax Facility, Pfizer and AstraZeneca.

"The government is also in the final stage of negotiations with Sinovac, CanSino and Gamaleya to secure a vaccine supply increase of more than 80 per cent of

the country's population or 26.5 million people.

"The 80 per cent has surpassed our earlier target of having 70 per cent (of the population) receiving these vaccines. Based on all completed and ongoing negotiations, the government will fork out US\$504.4 million (RM2.05 billion)," he said.

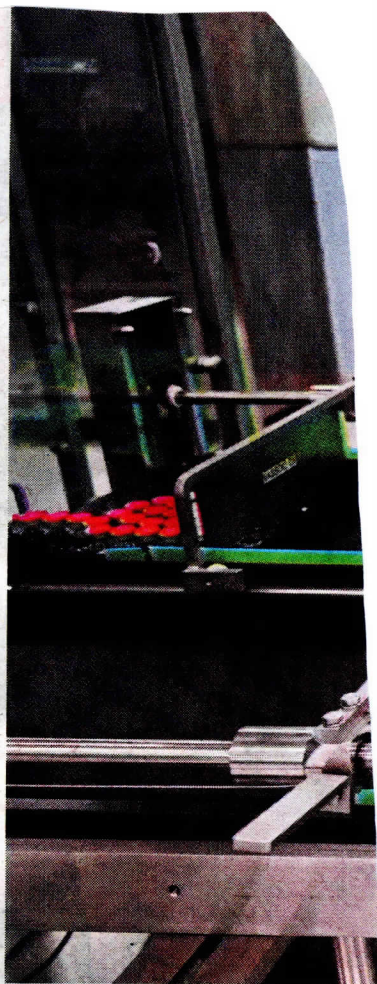
Muhyiddin said the agreements with Sinovac and CanSino from China, and Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology of Russia would add value to the country's science and technology sector, and would subsequently benefit the people and country's development.

These included the vaccine-bottling process technology in Malaysia, research and development as well as knowledge-sharing and technology transfer.

Muhyiddin said the government would continue negotiating with other pharmaceutical companies to ensure that the country had enough supply of vaccines.

"We will make certain that the acquired vaccines are safe and effective."

He also said that the Vaccine Supplies Access Guarantee Special Committee, co-chaired by the health and the science, technology and innovation ministers, would ensure that the vaccines were acquired speedily.



The government was expecting to receive and administer the first supply of one million vaccines from Pfizer to target groups as early as February, said Muhyiddin.

The Health Ministry's National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA), he said, would continue keeping tabs on the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines.

Muhyiddin also renewed his call to the people on the importance of embracing the new normal and continue to practise it in one's daily life, even after one had been vaccinated.

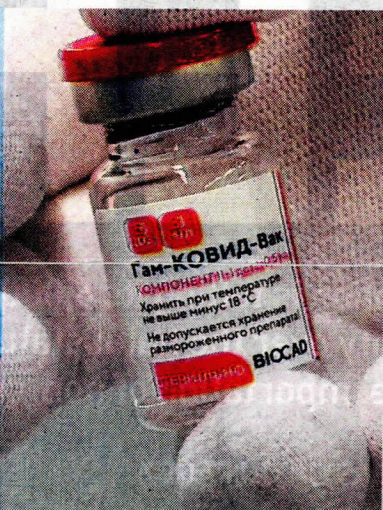
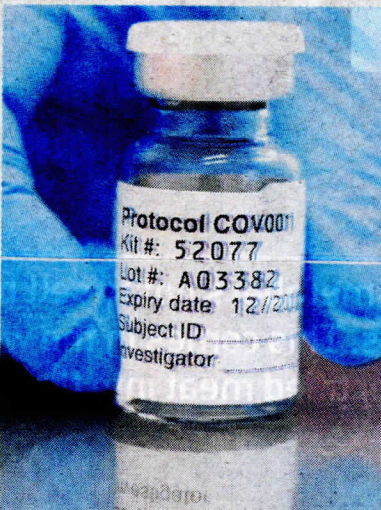
"We must adapt to the new normal because the virus is already in the community," he said, advising the people to wash their hands frequently with soap, wear face mask, and keep a safe distance from each other.

"*Insyallah* (God willing), we can face the challenges together."

Muhyiddin also said the rising number of Covid-19 cases in certain areas had not dampened the government's efforts to restore the country's economy and social activities to what they were before the pandemic.

The government, he said, was aware of how important the battle against Covid-19 was in its effort to ensure things would recover at a fast pace.

Last month, Muhyiddin announced that the government had inked a deal with Pfizer to obtain Covid-19 vaccines for 20 per cent of the country's population starting next year.



A combo picture showing vials of Covid-19 vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and Vaccitech in partnership with pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca (left), and Russia's Sputnik V vaccine developed by the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology. AFP PIC