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Govt **doubles** vaccine orders

TANGKAK: The government plans to increase its purchase of Covid-19 vaccines to cover the immunisation needs of about 60% to 70% of Malaysians, up from the 30% planned earlier.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this was because some nations had purchased doses exceeding their population.

"We have already got 30%. I have instructed Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba and Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar (Science, Technology and Innovation Minister) to negotiate and increase it from 30% to 60% or 70%.

"So far, this has been the advice of the Health Ministry. If it can be increased to that number, then more people will be protected from the

➤ Muhyiddin gives instructions to buy enough Covid drug for at least 60% of population

Covid-19 virus," he said in his speech at the Gambir state constituency Deepavali celebrations yesterday.

Muhyiddin, who is also Gambir assemblyman, said suppliers have also been asked to expedite delivery of the vaccine, which is scheduled to arrive in March.

"This (matter) is of utmost importance," the Pagoh MP said.

On Nov 24, the government signed a preliminary purchasing agreement with pharmaceutical company Pfizer to obtain 12.8 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to meet the immunisation needs of

20% of the population, or 6.4 million Malaysians.

Two days before that, an agreement with the Covax facility was also signed to meet the immunisation needs of another 10% of Malaysians.

Meanwhile, the prime minister also gave orders for Covid-19 temporary hospitals to be reopened in view of the high number of new cases in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negri Sembilan, Johor and several other areas, Bernama reported.

"This means that although the measures taken by the government

have been quite effective when compared to other countries, we have yet to overcome the pandemic."

"We have not been able to flatten the curve, and according to projections, this could take a very long time," he added.

On another matter, Muhyiddin said the government was conducting a comprehensive study on the number of Malaysians who have fallen below the poverty line as a result of the pandemic.

"The poverty line income has been raised to RM2,208 and when it is raised, many will fall into the B40 group ... the poor and hardcore poor.

"When Covid-19 happened, many could not work or conduct business... even if it's just a stall... (and) income fell and companies stopped hiring, too."