

# Only one old folks' home pre-registers for vaccination plan

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Only one out of 20 old folks' homes in Malaysia have pre-registered for Covid-19 vaccination, leaving residents and staff at other homes at risk of losing out on vaccines or getting them too late, according to officials involved with the vaccination plan roll-out for the elderly.

Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing at Universiti Putra Malaysia (MyAgeing) estimates there are at least 1,000 old folks' homes in Malaysia, half of which are unknown to the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Social Welfare Department (JKM) and therefore cannot be contacted. To date, only 50 centres have pre-registered for vaccination, according to MyAgeing and MoH.

Some are unlicensed, while others are licensed by various authorities, such as local governments.

Dr. Noraliza Noordin Merican, Family Health Development Division at the Ministry of Health (MoH), told Bernama it was important for all centres to pre-register so they could properly allocate resources to vaccinate staff and residents, who may be bedridden, on-site.

"If possible, we prefer to give (the vaccines) at their care centres because we prefer not to bring them out into the public because older people have higher risks. If we are able to vaccinate them at the centre, it is much more convenient and much safer for them," she said.

Some old folks' home operators, however, are hesitant about pre-registering for the vaccines for fear of repercussions. Representatives from the Association for Residential Aged Care Operators of Malaysia (AGECOPE) said many of their members were worried they would be fined for running unlicensed care centres or hiring undocumented foreign workers as caregivers to make up for staff shortages exacerbated by the pandemic.