

AstraZeneca vaccine stays for now, says KJ

By R. SEKARAN

rsekaran@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: Malaysia will stick with the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine for now until there is data to prove the vaccine produces a lot of adverse effects.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said rather than react to news reports, the government would rely on sound clinical data to show whether any vaccine was safe or unsafe.

"There are several layers of decision-making in choosing the vaccines, including at the ministry, a technical committee and the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency which advises the government on vaccines.

"So far, we have not received any reports, clinical data or advice that we should reconsider our decision in choosing AstraZeneca," said Khairy after a meeting at Universiti Sains Malaysia's (USM) Collaborative Research in Engineering, Science and Technology Centre here yesterday.

He said Malaysia would stand guided by its own ability to make decisions and would request clinical data analysis from AstraZeneca



All geared up: Khairy putting on a PPE while visiting the Catalyst for Malaysia's Technology Ecosystem in Bukit Jambul, Penang.

if there were continuous negative media reports on the vaccine.

Norway suspended the AstraZeneca vaccine on March 24 after reporting four deaths and 20,000 people suffering serious side effects.

On Malaysia producing its own vaccines, Khairy said the initiative

would take 10 years and its journey towards having the capability and capacity to produce vaccines was contained in the National Vaccine Roadmap.

"USM is now doing research on cholera vaccines, which will take some time before we can see the

outcome," he said.

"On the coronavirus vaccine, my ministry has given a total grant of RM5mil to Universiti Malaya and Universiti Putra Malaysia to do research and to develop it.

"However, we should not have high hopes. It is only at the pre-clinical research stage and any clinical trials or manufacturing can only be possible 10 years down the road."

To a question of whether those who received two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine from overseas would be allowed to travel to Malaysia, Khairy said it was an issue of quarantine.

"What we are looking into right now is whether we need to quarantine those who want to come in after receiving two doses.

"It makes logical sense to relax quarantine rules for these people as some vaccines are proven to cut transmission of the virus," he said, adding that regulators at the Health Ministry need to go through the data before recommending the relaxation of quarantine rules.

Watch the video
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