

# Private vaccination proposal lauded

➤ Businesses support plan as viable way to achieve herd immunity sooner

■ BY **HAKEM HASSAN**  
*newsdesk@thesundaily.com*

**PETALING JAYA:** A proposal for businesses to purchase Covid-19 vaccine and conduct their own immunisation exercises has won wide support in the private sector.

Business groups and unions agree that this is a viable way to achieve herd immunity sooner.

However, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) insists that vaccines be purchased through the government to ensure authenticity and safety.

Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said employers in the private sector are keen to take this route.

"This is feasible and it will help the country reach herd immunity quickly," he told *theSun*.

He said Selangor has started the ball rolling with its announcement that the Sinovac vaccine will be up for sale to any company that wishes to vaccinate its employees.

Since the announcement, orders for more than a million doses have already been received.

The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) said the vaccination exercise could be carried out through a public-private partnership immunisation initiative.

FMM president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said the move would be in line with the government's effort to strike a balance between preserving life and protecting livelihood.

"The FMM has never been in favour of a total lockdown given the irreparable damage it will have on the economy and people's livelihood," Soh said.

He hopes that the current movement control

order will be effective and will lead to the relaxation of certain conditions.

Soh also urged the government to permit manufacturers with contractual export orders to operate at 50% capacity even if they are not categorised as an essential sector of the economy.

"This will help them sustain business operations."

Malaysia's vaccination drive has been lagging behind its neighbours.

According to data compiled by CNN Health, only 3.5% of Malaysians have been fully vaccinated as of Sunday compared with 4.1% for Indonesia, 4.2% for Laos, while Cambodia is at 12.5% and Singapore 30.2%.

The slow vaccination drive has been cited as one of the reasons for the significant increase in the number infections and fatalities in recent weeks.

Apart from 17 essential service sectors, businesses have been barred from operating during the full movement control order enforced until June 14.

MTUC deputy president Mohd Effendy Abdul Ghani said while allowing employers to organise vaccination drives for their workers is a good move, it must come hand-in-hand with stricter enforcement of the standard operating procedures.

"The government should engage with the private sector as well as non-governmental organisations to work on ways to reach herd immunity sooner," he said.

Effendy also reminded employers that the onus is on them to bear the full cost of the vaccine. "The workers should not be charged."

Universiti Putra Malaysia epidemiologist Dr Malina Osman said priority should be given to those involved in keeping the economy humming.

"They should be vaccinated first given that we are now facing the threat of new variants as well as overall pandemic exhaustion," she said.

Allowing private companies to purchase vaccines for their staff would "massively" speed up the vaccination programme, she added.



**ESSENTIAL HELP ...** Malaysian Civil Defence Force personnel carry bags of food items onto a truck for distribution to residents in Pekan Bayan Lepas, Penang, which is under an enhanced movement control order. – **MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN**