

Vaccine certificate should not mean ‘green light’

PETALING JAYA: MEF President Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P., in responding to the government’s decision to lift travel restrictions for those who received two doses of the vaccine, advised private sector employers to continue to maintain strict SOPs for all their employees.

“MEF supports the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) that is positively moving towards achieving its target to vaccinate about 80 per cent of the population with two doses by year end,” he said.

“And we appreciate all the efforts of the government, the front liners, and the enforcement officers including PDRM for their undivided support to ensure that we are safe.

“However, the target group for Phase 1 are those above 18 years that only account for about 60 per cent of the population, leaving about 40 per cent still in waiting.

“Therefore, it is the responsibility of those who had received the vaccine to ensure that the 40 per cent are protected.

“And for this to happen, it must be clearly communicated that having had two doses of vaccine does not mean they should be allowed to move around freely.

“In fact, those who had been vaccinated need to take even greater precautions to ensure that they support the rest of the society until more people are vaccinated.

“Based on the experiences of other countries thus far, fully vaccinated individuals were allowed to move freely and that those infected suffered less severely, not requiring intensive care and thus do not over burden the public health system,” he said today.

“Hence, the SOPs must still apply to those who completed the vaccinations as there was no guarantee that the vaccines would fully protect against infection.

“There would still need to be continued surveillance with individuals needing to be tested, quarantined and cared for.

“The vaccines on its own will not end the pandemic as close contacts still need to be traced and quarantined and communities and stakeholders be engaged.

“As responsible employers, we have a legal duty to ensure a safe and healthy workplace free from hazards and diseases in accordance with existing laws and regulations on occupational safety and health.

“It is also important to clearly mention that the vaccine does not provide full immunity, it is only a protection so that if contacted we hope that the individual suffer less severely.

“Therefore, it is still very important to continue to wear mask, maintain physical distancing, sanitizing, washing and following all the SOPs.

“The message to those who are granted the Covid-19 vaccine certificate for completing two doses of vaccine should not give them the right to travel freely and engage in all forms of social gathering.”

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain cited the examples of other countries that removed restrictions and allowed greater freedom to only return to lockdown situation because of increased number of infections.

“We cannot go back to lockdown. The only way to avoid further lockdown is for the *rakyat* to diligently perform our part to protect the freedom with the established SOPs.

“We know that the Covid-19 is here to stay and it keeps changing and that new variants are emerging.

“As it is, fully vaccinated individuals could still be required to be screened if they experience Covid-19 symptoms, and many have been tested positive and not to mention those who had died.

“Those with vaccine certificate would still need to comply with the SOPs as there is no clinical evidence that the vaccines could fully protect against Covid-19 infection, or protect others from being infected.

“They are also prohibited from entering public places if confirmed positive for Covid-19.

He also said the authorities should ensure the NIP and related guidelines include awareness programmes on the benefits and risks of Covid-19 vaccinations in accordance with the rights of the individual, professional medical ethics and the legal principles of informed consent.

“MEF is of the view that the vaccine certificate holders should be subjected to SOPs while individuals who have not yet received two doses of vaccine should not be discriminated to avoid human rights violations, legal complications and negative social control policies,” he added.

For further information, contact the MEF Secretariat at 03-7955-7778 or fax 03-7955-9008 or email mef-hq@mef.org.my.

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