

Views divided on compulsory vaccination

Workers' reps all for mandatory inoculation but employers hesitant should they have to bear the costs

HAKEM HASSAN(/TAG/-/META/HAKEM-HASSAN) / 04 JAN 2021 / 14:43 H.



Residents from Taman Bayu Perdana in Klang queuing yesterday to take swab tests launched by the state government. – Asyraf Rasid/THESUN

PETALING JAYA: Views are divided on whether the Covid-19 vaccine should be made compulsory and who should pay for it.

Workers' representatives are all for mandatory vaccination but employers are hesitant to support such a move, and if it comes down to that, they are not prepared to pay for it.

In contrast to a World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendation that people be given the right to decide for themselves, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) insists that all workers must be vaccinated.

MTUC deputy president Mohd Effendy Ghani said just as swab tests have been made compulsory, so should vaccination.

He said the government should also bear the costs of vaccination.

“It will be unfair to place the burden on the employer,” he told *theSun*.

WHO recently stated that people should be persuaded to be vaccinated based on its merits. “Making it compulsory would be a step in the wrong direction and may backfire.”

The government has stressed that it will not make vaccination mandatory.

For many, especially those in the lower income group, the cost can be prohibitive.

Deputy Finance Minister II, Mohd Shahar Abdullah said recently that it will cost a person RM77.35 to be vaccinated.

Mohd Effendy said the government should avoid making the Social Security Organisation (Socso) responsible for footing the bill.

“Employees, employers and the government must have a discussion on the cost issues.”

While the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) insists that the government has to decide whether to make vaccination mandatory, it agrees with MTUC that employers should not be burdened with the costs.

“The policy on the Covid-19 vaccine should be decided by the government,” MEF executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said.

However, he cautioned that it may not be practical to make the vaccination compulsory “as we are not fully clear about its side effects”.

“We hope Socso will cover the cost of the vaccine as Covid-19 is recognised as a highly communicable disease,” he said.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Association Malaysia wants the government to allow business owners to decide whether their employees should be vaccinated. Its national secretary, Yeoh Seng Hooi, said if employers decide to make it compulsory, the costs should be borne by Socso.