

## MEF: PIKAS should prioritise critical sectors faced with high risk of infection

PETALING JAYA: The Public-Private Partnership Industrial Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (PIKAS) should prioritise critical industrial sectors facing high risk of infection especially companies with large workforce that live in centralised accommodation.

“If our aim is to achieve herd immunity and prevent the spread of infection, then all industries with large number of workers, such as the construction sector, must also be included immediately,” said MEF President Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman.

“The living conditions and working environment of these industries are far more favourable to spread Covid as they are working and living in close proximity.

“While we support the roll-out of PIKAS for certain manufacturers, priority must be given to those who need the vaccine now to avoid infection, and we recommend that PIKAS must be expanded to all 17 essential sectors.”

He said employers from other sectors of the economy are eager to participate in the PIKAS which would roll-out its on-site vaccinations at designated factories and industrial locations beginning on June 16.

“Companies allowed to operate during the MCO would want to ensure that all their employees are protected from Covid-19 and many are keen to participate in the PIKAS.

“This would help ensure there would be no more new workplace clusters in future. The speedy implementation of PIKAS should be made as a priority to protect workers against the risk of infection.”

Presently, employees of companies in critical manufacturing sub-sectors including electrical and electronics, food processing, iron and steel, medical devices, personal protective equipment (PPE), oil and gas and rubber products including medical glove manufacturing sub-sectors will be prioritised for vaccination under PIKAS.

It is understood that the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) had thus far received applications from approximately 500 companies, with a total of 106,591 workers to voluntarily participate in PIKAS.

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain said MEF supports the collaborative partnership between government and industry to ensure the smooth roll out and the success of PIKAS.

“Based on the fee structure provided by MITI, the costs for vaccination to be borne by the employer is about RM45 per employee. This is reasonable and acceptable as the government would be bear the cost of the Covid-19 vaccine,” he said.

“Employers must not be allowed to pass on the costs to the employees, however the government should consider giving tax rebate or tax exemption to companies on the costs incurred by the companies that participate in the voluntary programme.

“MEF had also applied to arrange for the PIKAS programme for our members and is awaiting approval from the Jawatankuasa Khas Jaminan Akses Bekalan Vaksin Covid-19 (JKAJV).

“MEF is of the view that it is important for all employees and the rakyat to be vaccinated as a matter of priority and as early as possible as such initiative will expedite the attainment of herd immunity among the community, which would then enable the nation to attain normalcy and the economic recovery will be smoother and faster.

“The government should ensure that vaccination of the most vulnerable groups be given a priority and should not be not be compromised.”

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