

# Malaysian Medical Association: Unfair to blame government for Covid-19 vaccine wastage



MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said at the time of procuring the vaccines, every country was rushing to secure enough for their population. — Bernama pic

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KUCHING, June 9 — It is unfair to blame the government for the Covid-19 vaccine wastage as at the time of procuring the vaccines, every country was rushing to secure enough for their population, said Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai.

The Malaysian Medical Association president said due to the high global demand for the vaccines, there were concerns over the supply.

“I think it was right to assume at the time that everyone was going to be vaccinated. We did achieve a high percentage of full vaccinations; however, uptake for the vaccines had dropped during and after the rollout of the first booster.

“By around this time, most economic sectors were opening up and the number of Covid-19 infections was on the decline. We can’t blame the government for a low uptake in booster shots. There was ample supply but many chose not to get the boosters even though it was recommended by the health ministry and medical experts,” he said in a statement.

Dr Muruga said it should also be noted that proof of full vaccination was no longer a requirement for air travel.

Given this, he said it is likely that a percentage of people who did not want to be vaccinated in the first place, would have remained unvaccinated.

Considering the high demand for vaccines at the start of 2021, he opined that the government did well in securing more than enough vaccines for the population.

At the time, he said every country’s health ministry would have targeted a 90 to 100 per cent vaccination and booster rate but the demand for vaccines dipped by the time the programme for booster shots had rolled out.

“Of course, with any spending of public funds, transparency must be insisted upon but there were Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) between pharmaceutical companies and the government that the government had to honour in order to secure vaccine supply. Any breaches of the NDA could have resulted in lawsuits.

“Overall, we believe the government at the time did its best to negotiate for the best deal for the vaccines but we may not have had the bargaining power due to the high global demand,” he added.

Dr Muruga said the Attorney General’s Chambers (AGC) did do its part in identifying clauses in Malaysia’s vaccine procurement agreement with Pfizer that it found not in favour of the government and had proposed amendments.

It was also a good move that the government did not fully rely on one vaccine supplier by procuring vaccines from AstraZeneca and Sinovac, he said. — Borneo Post