

Unfair To Blame Government For Covid-19 Vaccine Wastage – MMA

By CodeBlue | 9 June 2023

MMA says it's unfair to blame the government for Covid-19 vaccine wastage, as demand dropped after the first booster rollout. MMA pointed out there was high global demand at the time of procurement and it was right to assume everyone would get vaccinated.

It would be unfair to put the blame on the government for the high wastage of Covid-19 vaccines, as at the time of procuring the vaccines, every country was rushing to secure enough for their population.

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 vaccination, however, uptake for the vaccines dropped during and after the rollout of the first booster.

By this time, most economic sectors were opening up and the number of new Covid-19 infections were on the decline. We can't blame the government for the low uptake in booster shots.

There was ample supply, but many chose not to get the boosters, even though it was recommended by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and medical experts. The MOH has done its part in educating the public on the importance of boosters.

It should also be noted that proof of full vaccination is no longer a requirement for air travel, hence, 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, we feel the government did well in securing more than enough vaccines for the population.

At the time, 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 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 latter had to honour in order to secure vaccine supplies. Any breaches of the NDA could have resulted in potential 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.

The Attorney-General's Chambers did do its part in identifying clauses in Malaysia's vaccine procurement agreement with Pfizer, finding it not in favour of the government and has proposed amendments.

It was also a good move by the government by not fully relying on one vaccine supplier, instead procuring vaccines from both AstraZeneca and Sinovac.

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