

Company Name : Pharmaniaga Berhad
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Pharmaniaga To Distribute Covid-19 Vaccines Efficiently, Prioritise Safety Aspects, Says Group MD

KUALA LUMPUR (Dec 28): Pharmaniaga Bhd is ready to efficiently distribute Covid-19 vaccines, which are expected to be ready by the first quarter of 2021 (1Q21), as soon as it receives the go-ahead from the government.

Managing director Datuk Zulkarnain Md Eusope said the government-linked company had set up a team of 400 personnel skilled in logistics and distribution in five godowns in Selangor, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak.

He said besides ensuring that delivery is done using the just-in-time (JIT) format to hospitals (according to capacity and vaccination schedules to be determined by the government), the company also needs to focus on the safety aspect during the process of vaccine distribution.

"The vaccines will be much-sought-after products. As such, Pharmaniaga will tighten security at our godowns, during transportation and at the storage locations to avoid unwanted situations," he told *Bernama*.

He said the JIT delivery is aimed at preventing excessive stockpiling at government hospital storage facilities.

In preparation for vaccine distribution, the company is also prepared to undertake the necessary modifications to its factory, Pharmaniaga LifeScience Sdn Bhd in Puchong, to enable it to carry out the bottle development process for the Covid-19 vaccines.

Pharmaniaga has six factories in Malaysia, namely: Idaman Pharma Manufacturing Sdn Bhd in Sungai Petani and in Sri Iskandar; Pharmaniaga Manufacturing Bhd in Bangi; Pharmaniaga LifeScience in Puchong; Paradigm Industry Sdn Bhd in Klang; and Bio-Collagen Technologies Sdn Bhd in Seri Kembangan.

It also has another factory, PT Errita Pharma, in Bandung, Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Zulkarnain said Pharmaniaga warehouses had sufficient capacity for vaccine storage with a temperature range of two to eight degrees Celsius.

"Our total warehouse capacity is close to 30 million vials at any one time," he said.

Commenting on the halal status of the vaccines, he explained that the matter should be referred to the proper authorities.

"It should be noted that for any production of drugs and vaccines, the halal certification is issued only on the factory site after examination of the source of raw materials, work processes and the issue of introduction of prohibited substances to the factory site.

"Generic drugs and vaccines are not allowed to be labelled with any halal certification," he said, adding that Pharmaniaga had yet to receive any instructions on the matter.

Zulkarnain also noted that the appointment of any logistics and distribution company for the Covid-19 vaccines falls under the government's prerogative.

On Dec 22, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin announced that the government had signed an agreement with pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to obtain an additional 6.4 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines for the country.

This means that the government now has a 40% vaccine-supply guarantee through joint agreements with COVAX, Pfizer and AstraZeneca.

Through an agreement signed earlier with COVAX and Pfizer, Malaysia is scheduled to receive supplies for 30% of the country's population.