



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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Offer amnesty and vaccinate elderly residents in unlicensed old folks' homes

In dire times like these, the government should grant amnesty to unlicensed old folks' homes for every employee and resident access to Covid-19 vaccination. The registered ones are licensed by various authorities, such as local governments.

It is shocking that out of the 1,300 unlicensed facilities, only about 100 of them have their staff and residents registered for vaccination, constituting a mere 8 per cent of the total number. Such a situation is a disaster in the making.

Malaysia should glean the experiences of nursing homes ravaged by Covid-19 in the US resulting in the loss of lives of more than 28,000 nursing home residents and staff between late February 2020 and early May 2020 – a period of just about two months – and this was about 30 per cent of the country's Covid-19 deaths. The government should not let that happen in Malaysia because Covid-19 is going to rage through this vulnerable segment of population.

Hence, the government should prioritise its agenda in vaccinating all staff and residents of old folks' homes without penalising an unlicensed facility. Any licensing problems can be addressed amicably after the pandemic.

The government should identify the reasons why they had not been licensed and help them to get it done after the pandemic. The government should also facilitate and streamline the licensing process so that it is easier for the authorities to monitor the healthcare of the residents and to render assistance whenever needed.

It is important for the government to allay any distrust these unlicensed facilities have pertaining to the possible action that can be taken against them after the pandemic. Such distrust will subsequently work against the government's objectives of protecting the elderly population's welfare.

According to the Association for Residential Aged Care Operators of Malaysia (Agecope), there are 365 licensed private centres and 1,300 unlicensed facilities nationwide. This means that there are close to four unlicensed facilities to every registered one.

We reiterate our call to the government to reach out to the unregistered old folks' homes, offering them amnesty during the pandemic to encourage them to come forward to have their staff and residents vaccinated. Moreover, compassion and empathy for fellow human beings are hallmarks of successful law enforcement.

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