

Concerns over overcrowding at PPV growing

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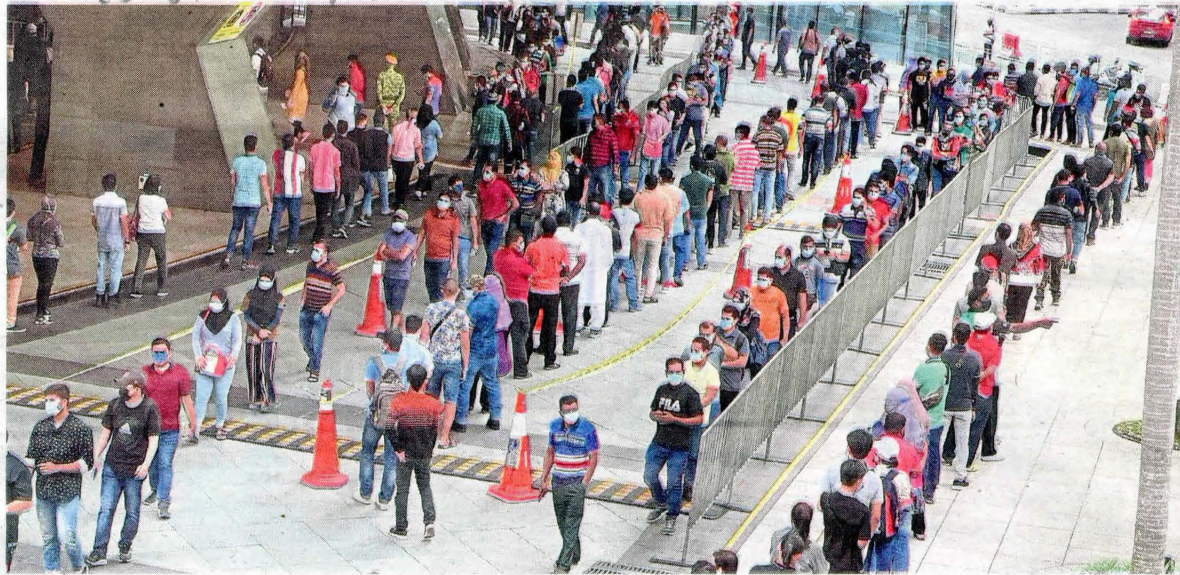
KUALA LUMPUR: Concerns about overcrowding at vaccination centres (PPV) are growing after images and videos of long queues and large crowds involving foreigners emerged on social media.

Health experts said although it was necessary to vaccinate as many people, including foreigners, as quickly as possible, the authorities must work together and be more prepared to control such a situation.

Universiti Malaya professor of occupational and public health Prof Dr Victor Hoe said such incidents should not be allowed to recur.

"The authorities should have moved in quickly to disperse the large crowd. They should also carry out a thorough investigation as to why it happened. If it was due to the recipients not following their appointment time, then they have to address the issue," he said yesterday.

On Wednesday, pictures and videos of foreign workers in long queues up to over a kilometre waiting to be vaccinated outside the KLCC PPV went viral on social media.



Snaking lines: Workers dropped off by employers ahead of appointment times seen queueing up at the KLCC vaccination centre early Wednesday morning. — LOW BOON TAT/The Star

Police carried out a probe and later confirmed that the overcrowding was due to some employers dropping off their workers not according to or much earlier than their appointment time.

Malaysian Public Health Physicians' Association president Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said while

the vaccination process was being ramped up nationwide, huge crowds and long queues raised concerns on physical distancing and standard operating procedure compliance.

He said the authorities should control such situations better to avoid overcrowding.

"Factory workers should be given their jabs under Pikas (Public-Private Partnership Industrial Covid-19 Immunisation Programme) and not mix with the general public.

"Walk-ins can be allowed for factory workers but have a systematic arrangement at the PPV for them,"

he said.

Dr Zainal Ariffin also said it was important to get undocumented immigrants vaccinated and the target should be for over 80% of the eligible population, regardless of citizenship.

"The foreign workers, especially the undocumented population, are a marginalised and vulnerable population who are prone to be the centre of Covid-19 clusters.

"They also move around, mix with others and are involved in many economic sectors," he said, adding that employers with undocumented foreign workers should take responsibility and find a way to vaccinate them.

Weighing in on the same issue, Dr Hoe said the responsibility of getting undocumented workers vaccinated should lie with both the government and employers.

"We should not discriminate, documented or undocumented foreign workers," he said.

Dr Hoe also attributed the current high infections to many in the community who had yet to receive their vaccine while there were also those who carried the disease.

A check at several mega-PPV in the city saw the situation improving with increased police presence.