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## **UNSTOPPABLE: FSG WON GLOBAL PROMINENCE AWARD 2020 & THE AWARDS UiTM 2021**



# HOPE IS ON ITS WAY: COVID-19 VACCINATION IN MALAYSIA

by Dr Mohd Shafiq Aazmi

Malaysia has moved into the second year of living with COVID-19 with total cases surpassing 800,000 and more than 6,000 fatalities. These are not just numbers but people, each with a life story that means a world to someone, very dearly missed and a great loss. To halt the spread of the virus, public health and social measures have been put in place since the first case of COVID-19 was detected in January last year. Into the second year of the pandemic, Malaysians have generally shown solidarity in practising the standard operating procedures (SOP) for COVID-19. Wearing masks, physical distancing and frequent hand washing are now the new norms for us. As we move into the third quarter of this year, there is greater hope with the emergence of additional tools — vaccines — to fight the virus.

The hope came on Feb 16 when the COVID-19 National Immunisation Programme Handbook was announced by the prime minister. The handbook, published by the COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee Special Committee (JKJAV), offered key information on the COVID-19 immunisation strategy in Malaysia. Six vaccines are being offered: AstraZeneca, Pfizer-BioNTech, Sinovac, CanSino Biologics, Johnson & Johnson and Sputnik V. These vaccines are our hope and "Power Rangers" to achieve herd immunity against COVID-19. AstraZeneca, CanSino Biologics, Johnson & Johnson and Sputnik V are viral vector vaccines. While Pfizer-BioNTech is a messenger RNA vaccine, Sinovac is an inactivated vaccine type.

With 530 locations of vaccine administration centres nationwide, the government aims for at least 80 percent of the adult population to be vaccinated by February next year. Out of 17.7 million Malaysians who have registered to be vaccinated, 7.6 million have received the first dose up to 11 July. To enhance awareness and participation, social media platforms and mobile applications have been used to disseminate verified COVID-19-related information. The third quarter of this year will be the most crucial period which determines the success of the immunisation programme. It is time for all Malaysians to continue to show solidarity in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. However, bear in mind that COVID-19 vaccines are not a "silver bullet". We need to continue adhering to the SOP. Continuous collaborative and comprehensive public health measures are warranted to combat the rapid genetic evolution of COVID-19.

Let us stay positive and keep up the attitude of "*Kita Jaga Kita*". Yes, hope is on its way!



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