

By Jay Ihsan

Ignorance all the way for Malaysians?

It was astounding that a so-called pandemic succeeded in bringing the world and humanity to its knees. Life literally came to a standstill with the world baffled at how best to tackle the coronavirus disease 2019 or Covid- 19.

Governments the world over did the unbelievable and unexpected - forcing the people into taking the mRNA untested Covid- 19 vaccines, protecting instead the vaccine makers and not the end users.

For those refusing to buy into the Covid- 19 narrative, be it wearing the face mask in public spaces or be vaccinated, the government threatened to make life difficult for them.

The drill back in Malaysia, a country of 32.37 million people, was no different. Lockdowns, face masks and vaccination were topmost priority.

While the Malaysian government held back from making Covid- 19 vaccination mandatory, breathing easy was no where on the horizon. Face masks became a regular feature in public spaces and places of prayer. So was the deal with vaccination – it became the people’s “identity”.

In fact, churches had their prayers interrupted when overzealous authorities turned up to ensure the standard operating procedure (SOP) was adhered to.

For individuals refusing the Covid-19 vaccines, Malaysia’s Health Minister Khairy Jamaludin unreservedly threatened to make life difficult for them.

A misfortune that the threats and intimidation bore results. On May 22, Khairy was quoted by national news agency BERNAMA as congratulating Malaysians on their good behaviour in the "transition to endemic" phase.

"We see in terms of the very good behaviour of Malaysians who still wear masks when they are in an open area or outside during the transition to endemic phase.

"This means Malaysians already know how to live with Covid- 19. They also know that if there are symptoms they shouldn't go out, shouldn't mingle...or they will isolate themselves."

Khairy also credited the high vaccination rate as a factor that aided in controlling the infections in the country - some 27.4 million Malaysians have been vaccinated against Covid- 19.

In February, Khairy via a tweet had this to say about booster shots: "Any booster is better than no booster. Although the MOH recommends a booster dose of Pfizer or AZ (AstraZeneca) for the best top-up protection, some are still asking for options.

"We will strongly recommend a Pfizer or AZ boost. But something is better than nothing."

It was also in February that the Health Minister issued an ultimatum to Malaysians - get the booster shot or else forgo their vaccination status.

Then he declared that there would be no benefits for those refusing the booster shot.

The unrelenting threats and ultimatums left an already dazed Malaysians in a state of disarray. Yet, they obliged for the booster shot,

only to regret later after their health took a turn for the worse.

There were cases of the old and young, all jabbed with the Covid- 19 experiencing and with some dying of heart attacks. The ruling government meanwhile remained nonchalant about these deaths.

It was not just Khairy doing the pitching in favour of the Covid-19 vaccines. The chief executive officer of ProtectHealth Corporation Sdn Bhd (which comes under purview of the Health Ministry) Anas Alam Faizli reported that 27 in one million recipients suffer from severe AEFI (adverse events following immunisation).

And Anas tweeted that vaccines are safe.

Malaysians who have been Covid- 19 vaccine harmed or injured have for reasons best known to them stayed silent.

To make matters worse, doctors in the country are not mandated to report the AEFI cases. It is left to the individuals to do so to the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPPRA) AEFI Repository.

In May, the Magistrate's Court ordered Liyana Razali to undergo psychiatric observation after she alleged two students died after being vaccinated with Covid- 19 vaccines last year.

The prime minister, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, is now urging Malaysians to get boosted yet again. Many who were unwilling then are now doing so citing fear of yet another new sub-variant.

Someone i know swears by the belief that "ignorance is pain and misery". Yet most Malaysians have chosen to remain ignorant and instead rolled up their sleeves for yet another mRNA shot.

Is ignorance the easy way out for Malaysians who then end up regretting having taken the Covid-19 vaccine?

Like many others the world over who rushed to get vaccinated against Covid- 19, most Malaysians too feel familiarity is no contempt when it comes to Covid- 19 vaccines and face masks.

Should we see this as the new normal for Malaysians or ignorance all the way?