

TOP GLOVE TO VACCINATE ALL WORKERS – IF IT’S EFFECTIVE

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Top Glove is already spending RM195 million to upgrade living conditions for 10,000 workers. (Reuters pic)

PETALING JAYA: The world’s largest glove manufacturer Top Glove is ready to have all its workers, including its 11,000 foreign workers, vaccinated if the vaccines are effective.

Top Glove’s complex of factories in Meru, Klang, has been the epicentre of the country’s largest Covid-19 cluster – Teratai.

The cluster has 7,090 cases, most of whom are foreign workers from Top Glove, and the company was forced to temporarily close 28 of its factories in Klang late last year due to the spike in Covid-19 infections among its workers there.

“Definitely. We are more than happy to vaccinate our workers if the vaccines are effective. That’s very important,” Top Glove chairman Lim Wee Chai said when asked about vaccinations during a webinar today.

“We don’t want to have vaccinations and then the workers get sicker. Then we are in trouble.

“Of course, it’s good that we let other people try first. Let the politicians try first. That’s good,” he said in jest.

Lim was responding to a question by Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia, Golam Sarwar, on whether Top Glove would vaccinate their workers.

During the webinar, Golam requested that Top Glove create a plan to vaccinate its employees after reminding Lim that “healthy workers are productive workers”.

Top Glove has 41 factories in the country.

Cramped housing conditions have been blamed for the spread of Covid-19 among foreign workers living in dormitories and hostels across the country, and Top Glove has committed to a RM195 million programme of upgrading housing facilities for 10,000 workers by July 2023.

Top Glove’s accommodations have been in the spotlight recently after the Labour Department last month said 19 investigation papers had been opened against the company under the Workers’ Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 (Act 446).

This followed raids on workers’ hostels at the company’s subsidiaries in five states – Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Kelantan and Selangor.

Act 446 mandates employers to meet minimum space requirements for workers' accommodation, basic facilities and safety and hygiene standards, a point which Deepak Dhakal, the Nepali embassy's labour councillor, stressed upon during today's webinar.

Deepak said that according to a memorandum of understanding for labour supply signed between Nepal and Malaysia in 2018, Malaysian employers have to provide decent accommodation with basic amenities that meet the stipulated minimum standards of safety and health.

"Our major concern is the rights of our nationals as an employee in a foreign land," he said.

"Recently, it has been reported that a huge number of foreign workers in Malaysia are not provided with accommodation that complies with Act 446.

"This is a worrying situation not only for the health and safety of the workers but also due to the pandemic across the world," he said.