

Govt mulls shot sales to firms

MONGKOL BANGPRAPA

The government is open to private companies buying Covid-19 vaccine doses for their employees, according to Suphan Mongkolsuthee, chairman of the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI).

He said the FTI discussed the issue with Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul last week when the FTI donated Covid-19 vaccine storage containers to the Public Health Ministry.

Mr Suphan said he told Mr Anutin that firms wanted to buy vaccines for their employees.

Mr Anutin told the FTI to send a list of the companies to the ministry which would procure vaccines from Sinovac and AstraZeneca on their behalf. These vaccines have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration and each dose would cost 1,000 baht, Mr Suphan said.

Kriengkrai Thiennukul, the FTI vice-chairman, said companies

with many employees want health officials to vaccinate their workers at their place of work while firms that have fewer employees can be vaccinated at a facility provided by the government.

Mr Anutin said yesterday another 800,000 Sinovac doses will arrive on Saturday and will be available 3-4 days later after quality checks and paperwork are complete. Another 1 million Sinovac doses will arrive next month. The permanent secretary for public health had been in talks with other producers to import more vaccines.

As for vaccines from AstraZeneca, they will be available to the public from June, he said, adding the new cluster of infections in Bangkok's Bang Khae district would not affect the planned distribution of vaccines.

Meanwhile, Yong Poovorawan, head of the Centre of Excellence in Clinical Virology at Chulalongkorn University, said he was recruiting about 80 volunteers to take part in a study on the safety and the level of immunity provided by the Sinovac and AstraZeneca vaccines.

The study is being supported by the Public Health Ministry and the National Research Council of Thailand which have provided the vaccines and funding to pay for immunity tests.