

It's back to nationwide MCO from May 12

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Putrajaya has decided to place the entire country under movement control order (MCO) restrictions from May 12 until June 7.

The decision was announced today despite Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin stating on March 18 during his *Pemerakasa* speech that a blanket MCO was unlikely to be imposed again.

Muhyiddin said the decision was made during the National Security Council meeting today which he chaired.

According to Muhyiddin, "all economic sectors" are allowed to operate this period.

A summary of the restricted activities are as follows:

1. District and state border crossings. [Exceptions: Emergencies, medical

reasons, work, "economy", vaccination appointments and for long-distance couples]

2. All gatherings. [Exceptions: Akad nikah with a mandatory cap on participants]
3. All sport and recreational activities. [Exceptions: Activities done individually, such as jogging and cycling.]
4. All educational institutions. [Exceptions: Students facing international examinations, daycare, pre-schools.]
5. More than three persons in a private vehicle, taxis, and e-hailing vehicles. [Exceptions: Commercial vehicles such as those used to carry cargo].
6. Dining in.
7. Having more than 30 percent of management staff in the office.
8. House visits and visiting the gravesite during Hari Raya.

Congregational Aidilfitri prayers are allowed to be held with a cap of 50 for premises with a normal capacity limit of more than 1,000. The cap is 20 for any

venue with a smaller capacity.

Non-Muslim places of worship can also operate, but the rules have yet to be issued at the time of writing.

Muhyiddin said "special measures" for Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan will also be continued throughout the MCO period. It is uncertain what these "special measures" are.

'Data and science'

Muhyiddin said that this round of MCO was necessary to prevent further spread of Covid-19.

"There are now Covid-19 variants that are more infectious while the capacity of the public health system is becoming more critical.

"(There are also) weaknesses in Covid-19 protocol compliance by some. These (factors) demands that the government take drastic action," said Muhyiddin.

Muhyiddin said "data and science" have shown that gatherings without physical distancing in confined spaces are the main cause of the spread of Covid-19.

"The chain of infection can only be broken by encouraging people to stay at home through enforcement of movement restrictions," he said.

Muhyiddin said Malaysia has successfully flattened the Covid-19 infection curve before and the current wave - which he described as the "third" despite some experts describing it as the "fourth" - was even more "ganas" (ferocious) and critical.

"Be disciplined in facing this third wave. Only we can save ourselves. Stay at home if you have no important things to attend to," he said.

Deteriorating situation

The announcement comes as Malaysia's Covid-19 outbreak worsened over the past few weeks.

The disease's effective reproduction number (R_t) has persistently remained above 1.00 since April 8, which meant the outbreak has been growing exponentially for 32 consecutive days up to yesterday. Data for today has yet to be released.

Exponential growth is a type of growth characterised by a relatively slow start

that snowballs rapidly over time, hence an R_t above 1.00 is not sustainable as it will eventually overwhelm the healthcare system.

Moreover, more Covid-19 patients are turning up sicker in recent weeks compared to previous surges in cases.

This meant more people are ending up in intensive care units than ever before even though the overall number of cases have yet to reach as high as those seen in January, and hospitals are struggling to cope.

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