

PM: RMCO EXTENDED TO YEAR-END

pg. 2

NST- 29/8/2020

It will take time
for country to be
free from Covid-19,
says Muhyiddin

VEENA BABULAL
AND THARANYA ARUMUGAM
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO), which was earlier slated to end on Monday, has been extended to Dec 31, 2020.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, in a televised speech yesterday, said the decision was made following an increase of Covid-19 cases in countries around the world and that it would take time before Malaysia was finally free from Covid-19.

"Things are still under control, but if there is an increase in infections in particular localities in the country, the government will carry out targeted measures such as the Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) or Targeted Enhanced Movement Control Order (TEMCO)."

He was referring to the Sivagangga cluster in Napoh, which forced the government to impose TEMCO in nearby areas.

He said throughout the RMCO's extension, enforcement would continue to be carried out under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 (Act 342).

"Our country is still facing challenges in curbing the transmission of Covid-19, as it is still actively spreading around the world.

"I realise that we cannot risk taking this super-spreading virus lightly in the country. Therefore, stricter quarantine rules at certain locations will continue to be enforced," he said.

Muhyiddin stressed that nobody was exempted from these rules and that any individual found guilty of breaching the rules would be punished.

He also endorsed the Health Ministry's recommendation to increase the compound for those found guilty of breaching the standard operating

procedure (SOP).

"Relating to this, I am in full support of the recommendations by the Health Ministry to increase the quantum of compound for those found guilty of breaching the SOP, to at least double or triple the current amount of compound.

"However, we will need to look into the matter and amend Act 342 first and foremost."

The government imposed the Movement Control Order on March 18 to stem the Covid-19 infection, with the country seeing 125 new Covid-19 infections and 553 cases in total, two days before the order was enforced.

The spike in cases then was the worst among Southeast Asian countries. The stringent phase of the curbs then transitioned into a conditional phase on May 1 until June 9 before the RMCO kicked off on June 10.

Muhyiddin had earlier said the RMCO would see more relaxed restrictions for certain sectors.

Under the recovery phase, the business and education sectors were allowed to reopen in stages under the SOP.

He also said the government was working to reduce the price of face masks.

"Since face masks are a necessity that we use almost all the time, the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry is in talks with manufacturers and suppliers to lower the price of face masks.

"*Insyallah*, if this negotiation is successful, the price of face masks will be more affordable. This will help ease the public's burden."

On the re-opening of economic sectors, Muhyiddin said almost all sectors had been allowed to operate, except nightclubs and entertainment centres.

These, he said, were places where new norms would be difficult to implement.

He also said foreigners were still not permitted to enter the country to halt imported cases.

"Sports activities are allowed, but without the involvement of international participants and spectators."

He said in line with the extension of the RMCO, the Covid-19

Fund managed by the National Disaster Management Agency would also be extended.

Muhyiddin said although the RMCO had been extended, the livelihoods of the people would not be affected by the new norms and SOP.

"We must continue to wear face masks, wash our hands regularly, maintain personal hygiene and avoid crowded places."

In the spirit of the 63rd National Day celebration themed "Malaysia Prihatin", he reminded Malaysians to be caring and responsible towards one another in their fight against the virus.

"We are all frontliners who are at the forefront in our fight against the pandemic. If we can play our part in curbing Covid-19 infections, our country will succeed in this battle more quickly."

Additional reporting by Farah Solhi