

# PM: STRICTER MEASURES NEXT TO CURB VIRUS SPIKE

Mandatory use of face masks and ensuring strict quarantine among measures mullied

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**T**HE rising number of Covid-19 cases and continued threat posed by the coronavirus may compel the government to take more stringent measures to ensure public compliance with safety regulations.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said these measures could include making wearing face masks mandatory in public areas, as well as scrapping the provision allowing those returning from abroad to serve their mandatory quarantine period at home.

"If necessary, the government will place Malaysians who return from abroad in quarantine centres to better manage imported cases. Enforcement will be stepped up with heavier penalties imposed on those who flout the law and regulations.

"The government is also mulling the possibility of making it mandatory to wear face masks in public areas. The details will be announced once these rules are finalised," he said in a televised address yesterday.

He noted that life had returned to a semblance of normalcy since the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) came into effect on June 10.

"Since the RMCO, everyone has returned to their normal lives like going out for work, business, shopping and recreational (activities) with their families.

"After the interstate travel ban was lifted, I observed many people taking advantage of it by returning to their hometowns or enjoying domestic holidays. I

myself went back to Muar a few weeks ago and enjoyed the *asam pedas* that is popular (there)."

He said bustling commercial areas like shopping malls, restaurants, hawker stalls and shops were a good sign for the economy.

"This is in stark contrast to when the MCO was enforced. I was told that hotels and other lodgings have received many bookings.

"After three months of being stuck at home, many of you would take the advantage to go for holidays with the family. Major highways have become congested with vehicles again, especially during weekends."

However, he said the pandemic was far from over, with 14.5 million people infected worldwide and 600,000 deaths.

He said although the case numbers were relatively low in Malaysia, he was concerned about the emergence of 13 new clusters during the RMCO.

"Even more worrying, Covid-19 cases have returned to double digits over the last few days. This situation should not be treated lightly by anyone. I'm sure you do not want the government to reinstate a lockdown. I hope that we do not need to go to that extent.

"Let it be enough that we all spent three months indoors to break the infection chain. The economy suffered badly, businesses experienced losses and many lost their jobs. Surely we do not want another lockdown."

Muhyiddin cautioned that a resurgence of cases could trigger a closure of sectors — as experienced during the MCO — and lead to an increase in the unemployment rate and undermine all economic recovery efforts undertaken so far.

"We must remember that the government has already announced the Prihatin, Prihatin



Tambahan and Penjana stimulus packages, totalling some RM295 billion, for the people's wellbeing and survival of businesses in these difficult times."

He said more than 2.75 million jobs had been saved under the Wage Subsidy and Employment Retention Programmes. In addition, over 800,000 businesses, including micro enterprises and small and medium enterprises, had benefited from the packages.

"I believe many of you who were affected by Covid-19 benefited from some of the government's aid measures. The aid is temporary in nature to help you weather this difficult period.

"Of greater importance is how we emerge from the crisis and ensure the recovery of the people's health and wellbeing."

He advised Malaysians to heed the standard operating procedures in place to break the chain of infection.

"Our success in battling Covid-19 depends on us. It hinges on our awareness, attitude and conduct. Our conduct in the new normal must continue. Don't assume that we no longer have to wear a face mask because the number of cases have gone down. Wear 'lah'."

He said everyone had become the nation's frontliners.

"We must constantly remind and advise each other. I believe that if we all play our roles to break the chain of infection, we will get through the RMCO phase successfully."



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