

PM's bold decision now seeing results, says Health DG

PUTRAJAYA: Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's unpopular but bold decision to take the bull by the horns in handling the Covid-19 pandemic has saved the day for Malaysia.

Assuming the post of Prime Minister at a most difficult time, he did not hesitate to impose the movement control order (MCO) to keep people indoors to reduce transmission of the deadly virus.

It was clear from the start that Muhyiddin had his work cut out the moment he was sworn in as Malaysia's eighth Prime Minister on March 1, as Covid-19 cases in the country then were already showing signs of an upward swing.

With the country's fate in his

hands, quick solutions were needed in the midst of a delicate and challenging period that put the seasoned politician's wisdom to the test as he was forced to take unprecedented measures, guided by the advice of the Health Ministry (MOH) as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Muhyiddin's introduction of the MCO on March 18 to contain the pandemic was touted by many as an unpopular but courageous move.

In the end, he announced the enforcement of the MCO in four phases until May 3, followed by the conditional MCO from May 4 to June 9 and the recovery MCO from June 10 to Aug 31.

The recovery MCO is part of the government's exit strategy as the country is now entering the recovery phase following a declining trend of infections, while the country's public health capacity in fighting Covid-19 has reached a better and more convincing level.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah described the MCO as a move enforced at a time when the nation was somewhat ill-equipped, with no vaccine in sight or effective drugs to treat patients.

"MOH discussed the Covid-19 situation with Tan Sri (Muhyiddin), and I was very impressed as he bravely decided to go ahead with the MCO at a time when many

nations, barring China, were not ready to commit to restriction measures.

"The MCO also meant that we had to enforce Act 342 (Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988), a piece of legislation never used before in Malaysian history.

"We supported the move. It was the best solution and there is no right or wrong (when it comes to such matters) as no other countries had done it - as the saying goes, we were in uncharted territory and this took courage," he said in an interview with Bernama.

Recalling March 16, when Muhyiddin announced the decision to introduce MCO, Dr Noor Hisham

said many were sceptical of the Prime Minister's decision.

"It was an unpopular move but then again, this was not a question of popularity. This was about the country's safety and if this was the way to save the nation, we would go ahead with it.

"Fast forward, we have now seen how the MCO has managed to flatten the Covid-19 curve, while many neighbouring countries followed suit. This shows that Malaysia is at the forefront in using a method that has never been used in other nations, especially within Asia," Dr Noor Hisham said.

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