

HARD HIT

# PM: IT'S TIME TO INNOVATE

Govt will do all within its means to revitalise economy and return workers to employment

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THE government will continue to put in place measures that strike a balance between safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said Covid-19 had hit the country hard, impacting the way Malaysians lived, worked and conducted business.

"The pandemic has made us realise that for us to move forward, we need to break away from normalcy and develop measures to cushion its impact on our people and economy.

"It is no longer business as usual. It is time for new ideas. It is time to innovate," he said in a

## No ulterior motive in declaring emergency, says Muhyiddin

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has reiterated that there was no ulterior motive in declaring an emergency, apart from helping to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Speaking at a dialogue session with private sector representatives organised by the International Trade and Industry Ministry here yesterday, he said the sole rationale behind the declaration was to fast-track legislative measures that were related to the management of the pandemic.

"This covers matters related to the use of private hospital assets, temporary land ownership, buildings or private hospital

dialogue session with private sector representatives organised by the International Trade and Industry Ministry here yesterday.

He said the government would do everything within its means to revitalise the economy and return workers to employment.

Muhyiddin acknowledged and expressed gratitude for the role played by the private sector in supporting the government in the battle against Covid-19, particularly during the Movement Control Order (MCO).

He urged industries to ensure strict compliance with the standard operating procedures at their workplaces and collaborate with the government in adhering to the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 2019 by providing safe and conducive facilities and amenities.

This, he said, would ensure there was no congestion in workers' accommodation and boost hygiene in it, which in turn would reduce the risk of virus transmission.

He said 83 per cent of cases were from the manufacturing sector, adding that this was a worrying trend.

"Despite this, it is telling that

moveable property, and to allow the use of private hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients.

"So please be assured that there is no sinister motive behind this declaration of emergency."

Muhyiddin said the emergency would not be used to violate human rights, private property and other legal rights.

"Malaysia is a firm believer in the rule of law, so we will not behave in a manner that violates the legal principles that we hold dear.

"And it is imperative that the business community, both domestic and international, understand this."



Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin arriving at the dialogue with private sector representatives organised by the International Trade and Industry Ministry in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. He is flanked by Senior International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali (right) and Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Lim Ban Hong. BERNAMA PIC

the source of this increase is at ignition sites, noticeably workers' accommodation and hostels, rather than work premises or manufacturing lines.

"Equipped with this knowledge, we can focus our resources and offer targeted responses that ensure a prompt reduction of cases.

"Again, the private sector must assume an integral role in this regard."

He said that while the government did not intend to impose another MCO, it would impose targeted MCOs on locations considered as point-of-ignition sites.

He urged the private sector to embrace new technologies to move forward and accelerate economic recovery.

The pandemic, he said, had been an enabler for hastening the adoption of digital solutions and had demonstrated the importance of upgrading and strengthening technology and infrastructure to ease the process of doing business.

This included reducing reliance on unskilled labour, as the country moved swiftly to automation and digitalisation, he added.

"Another silver lining has been this newfound urgency to the digital inclusion agenda, to enable millions to work, learn and connect digitally.

"Now, more than ever, connectivity should be at the core of all our priorities."

He said with this in mind, the government had recently announced a Digital Transformation Roadmap, containing action plans that focused on expanding and improving Malaysia's digital connectivity.

The US\$12.7 billion National Digital Network (Jendela) action plan, he added, would act as a

platform to achieve aspirations under the roadmap by accelerating the country's digital connectivity.

This would be done through widespread deployment of mobile, fibre and fixed wireless access, and paving the way for 5G technology, which, he said, would push the adoption of technology and digital transformation.

"This is necessary for the country's economic trajectory."

He said Malaysia recognised that Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0)-based industry would accelerate the growth of the digital economy.

Under IR4.0 technology-aspirated initiatives, the government had introduced Malaysia 5.0, which was a digital transformation agenda for businesses, he said.

He said the agenda would address digital accessibility, financial inclusion, productivity and growth through the tools of IR4.0, such as fintech, blockchain and artificial intelligence.

On trade, he said Malaysia, as an open economy heavily reliant on trade, would continue being a supporter of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

The government, he said, would continue to engage in regional integration initiatives, including through an active pursuit of free trade agreements (FTAs), which brought benefits to the country.

He said this was the main reason behind Malaysia's participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, which granted preferential access to one-third of the world's population, a market worth 29 per cent of the global gross domestic product.

Touching on the country's

stand on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), he said Malaysia would remain open to the idea of deepening economic integration through FTAs.

"CPTPP is a high-quality, high-standard agreement and we will in due course determine a pragmatic way forward for this FTA.

"I am pleased to note that the International Trade and Industry Ministry is exploring some options on this front, including ideas to facilitate our ratification of the CPTPP.

"In addition, targeted stakeholder consultations are ongoing to ensure that all parties understand Malaysia's rights and obligations under this agreement."

He added that the government would continue to pursue and adopt robust trade and investment policies, fostering an enabling ecosystem for businesses to thrive and improve domestic processes with a view to facilitate investors.

Domestically, the government had introduced the Safe@Work initiative, aimed at introducing a safe work bubble that would enable the continuity of manufacturing operations, even when there were Covid-19 cases at work premises, he said.

He expressed hope that the efforts would receive the support of the private sector.

The government, he added, would continue to offer assistance and facilitation to Malaysians who had been displaced or lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 crisis.

He said the government had allocated funding to reskill and upskill workers to ensure that they had the right skills-set to return to the employment market, particularly in the post-Covid-19 era.