

# Business sector says no to full MCO

## Targeted approach such as tightening of SOP preferable to lockdowns'

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**PETALING JAYA:** Business industry players have called on the government not to resort to a full-scale lockdown to curb the rising Covid-19 cases but to look at targeted approaches such as tightening the SOP.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan, responding to talk of a potential lockdown, said a movement control order similar to the one in March last year would do more harm than good.

"The number of new infections is a real cause of concern among employers, employees and members of the public.

"There are right steps to handle the situation, but these should not include the MCO because of the negative impact of such a lock-

down on the economy.

"We cannot afford to face that situation. As a business, we are not in favour of a total lockdown," he said.

He urged the government to produce an unambiguous SOP for members of the public and enforcement officials.

"What is needed here are clear guidelines where there can be no two interpretations of the SOP.

"For example, if people want to dine out, what is the proper procedure and what is the seating arrangement?" he said.

On Wednesday, Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the government was looking to adopt a more targeted approach to stem the rising Covid-19 cases in the country.

Malaysia's top health official said the country's healthcare system is facing a challenging time, adding that a "circuit breaker" is needed

to handle the pandemic.

SME association president Datuk Michael Kang concurred that a stricter enforcement of the SOP should be in place.

"We do support tightening the SOP, as everyone is too lax about adhering to the SOP.

"Firstly, we need a good tracking and monitoring system of confirmed and suspected Covid-19 cases, which would include those who are in home quarantine.

"We can also develop an app where the Health Ministry can monitor home quarantine cases, which may include those who suspect themselves of having Covid-19 but who have mild or no symptoms," he said.

Strict guidelines, he added, should be quickly issued for festivals like Chinese New Year, such as limiting unnecessary travel.

Kang also stressed that tightening restrictions should not be in the

form of a full-fledged MCO.

"We should not restrict interstate travel for business purposes. Even if we have a 'lockdown', we can only do it for a short period of time, we won't be able to completely eliminate the virus forever.

"We must learn how to survive with Covid-19. The lockdown is only a short-term solution," he said, adding that the public must learn to be self-disciplined.

Malaysia Retailers Association vice-president Datuk Ameer Ali Mydin understands that the government has to balance lives and livelihood and might be forced to reconsider implementing a full MCO due to the recent rise in Covid-19 cases.

But before the government decides on such an action, he urged it to first call upon stakeholders for a joint consultation to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the earlier MCO.

"The suggestion of course will be for the government to go for a very targeted approach and use the enhanced MCO method," he said.

Ameer pointed out that if a full-blown MCO were to be implemented, businesses would suffer and losses would be unsustainable for retailers.

"More businesses will close down too. The government's earlier intervention was not enough to help sustain business," he said.

He also lamented at how politicians were more focused on their own survival.

"The rakyat will be left to figure out for themselves how to survive," he said.

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**See pages 15 & 16**