

# Muhyiddin's stewardship one year on

ANY fair-minded person would acknowledge that for a whole year Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has managed the affairs of the nation relatively well. His stewardship is all the more remarkable when we consider that for most of the time that he has been Prime Minister since March 1, 2020, there has been a sword of Damocles dangling over his head - a sword in the hands of four or five power-hungry politicians hell-bent on ousting him.

In spite of this he has ensured - with the help of his Cabinet, the Health Ministry and the nation as a whole - that the Covid-19 pandemic is effectively controlled while lives are protected and livelihoods safeguarded. Balancing lives and livelihoods is a Herculean task facing most governments. Malaysia is certainly within the top bracket of nations in the handling of the pandemic. Its mass immunisation programme, which began on Feb 24 with the vaccination of frontliners, is a huge step in the present phase in the fight against the invisible virus.

Protecting lives and livelihoods is intimately linked to generating economic activities. As with the pandemic, the Prime Minister has been totally focused on creating jobs, ensuring that economic aid packages reach their targets and



**Leadership:** Muhyiddin delivering the One Year: Malaysia Prihatin keynote address at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday. — Bernama

that the vulnerable in particular have food on their table.

There have been five stimulus programmes so far buttressed by the biggest budget in the nation's history valued at RM322.5bil for 2021. Malaysia was also one of the first countries to implement a moratorium on the repayment of loans taken from banks.

As part of a comprehensive plan to revitalise the economy, the Muhyiddin government has placed a great deal of emphasis on digital transformation. It is estimated that the digital economy could create

500,000 jobs and would contribute 22.6% to the nation's gross domestic product by 2025. Training and skill acquisition would be directed towards this end.

Yet another achievement of the government in the last one year has been its concerted drive to curb and eliminate corruption in enforcement agencies. This explains why personnel in departments such as Immigration, Customs and the police have been hauled up in recent months. Muhyiddin has also pledged to implement the National Anti-

Corruption Plan formulated by the previous Pakatan Harapan government.

Equally significant is the Prime Minister's pledge to uphold and respect the independence of the judiciary, which is fundamental to the integrity of the entire system of governance. This is not just a verbal commitment. There are several high-profile corruption cases before the Malaysian courts and since they involve some major political figures from Umno whose members of Parliament provide critical support to Muhyiddin, his principled refusal to interfere in the judicial process to "save" these individuals is a courageous move rare in the annals of Malaysian politics.

Apart from his commitment to the integrity of the judiciary, Muhyiddin is the first Prime Minister to launch a National Unity Blueprint (2021-2030). Because it contains strategies linked to aspirations, the blueprint conveys the impression that it is a serious endeavour. Of course, a lot depends on its actual implementation.

Another long-term plan which became a reality in 2020 during Muhyiddin's tenure was the much awaited Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). It is anticipated that RCEP will not only boost intra-Asean trade but also

accelerate the region's economic development through the synergy derived from Asean's interaction with the more advanced economies of RCEP such as Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. Some have even argued that RCEP as a regional grouping could change the dynamics of power in the global economy.

The achievements noted here underscore the significance of Muhyiddin's first year as Prime Minister. It is not only in his approach to the unprecedented health and economic crises that he has proved his mettle. By initiating changes in other areas which are of tremendous long-term importance, such as the challenge of national unity, he has shown that he is a visionary leader in his own right.

May he continue to lead the nation with that deep sense of responsibility that emanates from his abiding faith in God.

**CHANDRA MUZAFFAR**  
Kuala Lumpur

*Note: Dr Chandra Muzaffar is the president of the International Movement for a Just World. He has been writing on issues in Malaysian society for five decades.*