

SOP not set in stone, says PM

'It will be tweaked and changed according to the situation on the ground'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The National Security Council's standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the ongoing movement control order are not static but will change depending on the situation on the ground, says the Prime Minister.

The SOPs, said Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, have to change in accordance with the Covid-19 situation at any one time.

"They are not static. (They are) dynamic. We have to look at the situation and this requires adjustments to deal with different situations.

"For example, before this, restaurants were allowed to receive customers for dine-ins. Then it was not allowed.

"I apologise if there are those who are confused," he said, adding that the National Security Council (NSC) does not come up with any SOP unilaterally but after discussions with relevant parties.

These would include the Attorney General and Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, before the SOP is studied, gazetted, announced and enforced, Muhyiddin told Bernama and RTM in a *Special Discussion on the Challenges of Covid-19* programme last night.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister said state governments did not have the authority to change the SOP as this power rests with the Federal Government under the Health Ministry's Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 or the Human Resources Ministry's Minimum Standards of Housing, Accommodation and Employee Facilities Act 1990.

On SOP violations, he said any punitive action taken must be based on the law.

"If anyone commits an offence, we must take action so that he or she is punished. There are many cases now (involving) celebrities and others. I don't want to mention any names, but it (any action) must

be based on the law," he added.

He said authorities have the power to arrest offenders or impose RM10,00 fines precisely because the SOP has been gazetted.

"If it is not gazetted, it is not valid. This is something that not many people know.

"That's why if the government decides on an SOP, as long as it is not gazetted, it cannot be enforced yet," he added.

Asked about alleged double standards in enforcement of the SOP, Muhyiddin said there was no such thing in government policy.

However, he said with Malaysia having a population of 30 million people, the authorities could not monitor everyone and this might give rise to the perception that some have managed to get off.

Muhyiddin urged the people not to violate the SOP because this was not meant to restrict their freedom or rights.

"There are those who asked why there is no total lockdown,"

Muhyiddin said.

"Do your own lockdown or your own self-lockdown.

"Please stay at home and tell others to do the same because any effort will not work if the people do not adhere to the SOP," he added.

He said the government decided not to impose a total lockdown such as that under MCO 1.0 as this would affect livelihoods and many would lose their jobs.

"If the people can't work, the economy would collapse and to redevelop it, the government would have to spend RM340bil on stimulus packages. That is not a small amount.

"If we close all economic sectors, we will face bigger problems, and the country would not be able to recover later," he said.

He added that when all economic sectors were closed during the first movement control order in March last year, the economy bled RM2.4bil a day.

If there was such a lockdown

now, Muhyiddin said it would cost up to RM500bil to help the people and stimulate the economy again.

"I don't want to see people sacrificed due to my complacency or theirs.

"I also don't want our economy to collapse," he said, adding that this is why the government decided to tighten the SOP under MCO 3.0.

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin said he was confident that the country's economy would fare better this year, fuelled by government action as well as the resurgence of global trade.

"The Covid-19 pandemic may not be over but our economy is already showing signs of improvement," he said.

"Our exports are increasing, our imports are increasing," Muhyiddin said, adding that a growth of 6.5% to 7.0% had been projected.

He added that the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme would also help improve economic sentiment and outlook.