

MCO 2.0 may end soon
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PUTRAJAYA: The second movement control order, or MCO 2.0, may not be extended from the tentative Feb 4 end date, says the Health Ministry.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the government was concerned that a prolonged MCO would be too detrimental to the country's economy.

After the four-week MCO period, the government will then possibly reinstate the conditional MCO.

"We do not want to prolong the MCO. If it is prolonged, our economy could be affected. We need to balance health and economy, life and livelihood.

"So, we implement the MCO until Feb 4 and follow up with the conditional MCO.

"With the combination of the MCO and the conditional MCO, we can reduce the number of cases to two digits by May. This is our projection," said Dr Noor Hisham at a virtual media session.

He said the current R0 (infectivity rate, pronounced R-naught) had gone down to 1.06 from 1.2, indicating that the number of Covid-19 cases might be on the decline.

"Today (Monday), the number of cases is 3,048, which is less than the day before (3,346 cases on Sunday).

“We hope the cases can stabilise at 3,000. Right now, the R0 has gone down to 1.06 but this is not enough.

“Tomorrow, it could be less than 1.06. Better if it is less than 1.

“So we are hoping that in the first two weeks of the MCO, the number of cases are stable and that there is no increase.

“And then, after Jan 27, we expect to see the number of cases go down, ” he added.

MCO 2.0 was first imposed from Jan 13 in several states for a period of two weeks, and was initially supposed to end on Jan 26.

It was extended to all states and the Federal Territories, except Sarawak, and will now last until Feb 4.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry will be looking to begin its first round of Covid-19 vaccinations at the end of February.

Dr Noor Hisham said the first round of 500,000 vaccine doses would be reserved for frontliners, especially those in healthcare.

“The vaccination period will be from March to May. Each of those who are vaccinated will be given their first dose, and the second dose after 21 days, ” he said.

After the frontliner phase was complete, he said the second group would be those who were vulnerable such as the elderly and those with severe diseases.

The third phase is for 17 million citizens who are of working age.

Dr Noor Hisham also said the ministry had identified 130 private hospitals that could treat Covid-19 patients in Category 3 and above.

“Out of the 130 private hospitals, 95 of them have agreed to help the ministry to treat Covid-19 patients.

“We are still waiting for an answer from the rest. With this, there is an additional capacity of 1,286 hospital beds as well as 65 intensive care beds and 54 ventilators from the private sector, ” he said.

“This is a great development as we have engaged the private sector in less than a week and we have received a good response.”

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