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THE COVID-19 CHRONICLES OF MALAYSIA



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“

We will get through this together, as Malaysians, as one country...This is the time for us to be strong and persevere, for God willing, we shall prevail.

-Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah
Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah ☞



A Nation's Public Health Saga



The COVID-19 Chronicles of Malaysia | In the Face of a Pandemic

31 Dec 2019 - 30 Jun 2020

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MAera

Malaysian Alliance for Evidence-Based Rapid Reviews in Health Systems Decision-Making

Product on Health Systems

Visit <http://maera.nin.gov.my/index.php/covid-19-health-systems-response> for
the interactive version of this Chronicle.



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The COVID-19 Chronicles of Malaysia | In the Face of a Pandemic

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COVER DESIGN by Serene Yap Wuan Shuen.

LINKS to references and sources of information are available in the soft copy of this Chronicle. Download it at: maera.nih.gov.my

METHODS can be found here: <https://osf.io/9tehn/>

PROOFREADING by Serene Yap Wuan Shuen.

DISCLAIMER

The details, views, interpretations, implications, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the other investigators participating in the project nor the views or policies of the Ministry of Health Malaysia. All mistakes are solely the authors'.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
2019-nCoV	Provisional name for Novel Coronavirus. Renamed as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATM	Malaysian Armed Forces (Angkatan Tentera Malaysia)
B40	Household income classification, lowest 40% of population
CMCO	Conditional Movement Control Order
COVID-19	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 disease
CME	Continuous Medical Education
CPRC	Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre
DG	The Director-General Of Health
DHO	District Health Office
DORSCON	Disease Outbreak Response System Condition
E-CMCO	Enhanced Conditional Movement Control Order
EMCO	Enhanced Movement Control Order
ETS	Electric train service
HCW	Healthcare workers
HSO	Home Surveillance Order
ICU	Intensive care unit
IHR	International Health Regulations
IHSR	Institute for Health Systems Research
ILI	Influenza-like illness
IMR	Institute for Medical Research
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
JAKIM	Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia)
JAKOA	The Department of Orang Asli Development (Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli)
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
KTM	Malayan Railways (Keretapi Tanah Melayu)
KTMB	Malayan Railways Limited (Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad)
M40	Household income classification, middle 40% of population
MAEPS	Malaysia Agro Exposition Park Serdang
MAera	Malaysian Alliance for Embedding Rapid Reviews in Health Systems Decision-Making
MCCBCHST	Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism
MCMC	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MCO	Movement Control Order

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
MERCY	Medical Relief Society Malaysia
MERS-CoV	Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus. Identified in 2012
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOSTI	Ministry of Science, Technology And Innovation
MySED	Malaysian Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies Workplan
NADMA	National Disaster Management Agency
nCoV	Novel coronavirus
NGO	Non-governmental/ non-profit organisation
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NPHL	National Public Health Laboratory (Makmal Kesihatan Awam Kebangsaan)
NSC	National Security Council
PBKL	Kuala Lumpur Wholesale Market (Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur)
PDRM	Royal Malaysian Police (Polis Diraja Malaysia)
PHC	Public Health Clinic
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PUI	Person under investigation
RAT	Rapid assessment team
RMO	Restriction of Movement Order (a cordon sanitaire). Also referred to as Movement Control Order
RRT	Rapid response team
RTK	Rapid test kit
RT-PCR	Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
rRT-PCR	Real time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
SARI	Severe acute respiratory infection
SARS-CoV	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. Identified in 2003
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. Also referred to as 2019-nCoV
SOP	Standard operating procedures
UMMC	University of Malaya Medical Centre (Pusat Perubatan Universiti Malaya)
UMP	Medicines Through Post (Ubat Melalui Pos)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organization

Foreword



Photo by Sondi Satriaka

Minister of Health Malaysia

Malaysia is striving to handle the COVID-19 pandemic amidst unknown variables - and succeeding remarkably well.

Navigating through these uncharted waters has been an arduous journey, yet an inspirational one, because it brought out the best of our countrymen. Malaysians from all walks of life came together, hand-in-hand, to brave through this unprecedented event as one united nation.

The "whole-of-government" approach - the swift and strong inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination - is pivotal, and with all of society, we are one in the fight.

I commend the officers in the Health Ministry for their efforts in setting to paper the chronology of public health responses to COVID-19 in our country.

I envision that this record will prove useful to future officers in the country, and perhaps in other countries, in their aspiration to achieve greater health systems preparedness and resilience.



“

Ultimately, we are all fighting against the same enemy and with unity and good regional cooperation, we will win this.

- Adham bin Baba, at the 73rd World Health Assembly 

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long horizontal line with a vertical stroke and a stylized flourish at the end.

YB Dato' Sri Dr Adham bin Baba
Minister of Health, Malaysia

Director-General of Health Malaysia

Emerging infectious diseases will continue to challenge health systems worldwide, and Malaysia is not spared.

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted Malaysia's health systems, challenging it to be more resilient, to adapt, to bend and create a new way of life, and not break, akin to the graceful willow rather than the mighty oak.

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic presents opportunities for health systems transformation, an avenue for tremendous growth, the broadening of horizons and achieving the unthinkable.

I welcome this Chronicle (In the Face of a Pandemic) by the National Institutes of Health that documents the health system responses the Ministry of Health has taken in coming to grips with, and overcoming, this pandemic.



“

When our people and resources come together we can do endless possibilities.

- Noor Hisham bin Abdullah 

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jheh', written in a cursive style.

Datuk Dr Noor Hisham bin Abdullah
Director-General of Health, Malaysia

Deputy Director-General of Health (Research & Technical Support)

The World Health Organization lauds Malaysia in her handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, citing a "whole-of-government" approach, while simultaneously calling for the prevention and reduction of stigma and discrimination, a worldwide struggle. [↗](#)

Such are the challenges for a country in charting the course with a threat that is invisible to the naked eye, yet is globally feared.

Independent of the players involved, researchers from the National Institutes of Health synthesized publicly available information to objectively map Malaysia's health system responses. Kudos to them for this conscientious effort.

Actions and responses taken behind the scenes, *sebalik tabir* as it were, is documented in another publication for experiential learning, and complements this Chronicle.



“ 危机

When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters - one represents danger, the other represents opportunity.

- John F. Kennedy [↗](#)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hishamshah'.

Dr Hishamshah bin Mohd Ibrahim
Deputy Director-General of Health
(Research & Technical Support)

Director of Institute for Health Systems Research

The Institute for Health Systems Research (IHSR) is given the mandate to document the art of Malaysia's war against COVID-19.

In this second Chronicle, IHSR employed the **MAera** (Malaysian Alliance for Embedding Rapid Reviews in Health Systems Decision-Making) approach - to chronologically record events that the Ministry of Health has announced in press releases, made public, or communicated to all of society. The result - The COVID-19 Chronicles of Malaysia | In the Face of a Pandemic.

To complement this Chronicle, IHSR is collaborating with key policymakers in the Ministry of Health and beyond to document behind-the-scenes efforts in the form of a country report.

Together with our partners, IHSR sets to print, the health systems strategies of Malaysia, in managing the COVID-19 pandemic.



“

A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.

- Albert Einstein 

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Nor Izzah binti Ahmad Shauki
Director
Institute for Health Systems Research
National Institutes of Health Malaysia

In the Face of a Pandemic

“

Kita jaga diri kita, kita jaga keluarga kita, kita jaga komuniti kita dan kita jaga negara kita.

We take care of ourselves, we take care of our families, we take care of our communities and we take care of our country.

- Noor Hisham Abdullah [↗](#)



Prologue





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