

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • 4 MAY 2020

Planning for a Phased Restart

The Malaysian Health Coalition (MHC) has a consistent position of a phased restart of our economy and society, expressed in our Joint Statements on 11 April 2020 and 23 April 2020. We understand that the movement control order (MCO) carries psychological, emotional and economic cost to the Rakyat. The MCO cannot be imposed indefinitely, and there is no “best time” to restart Malaysia.

However, we urge that any restart be done in phases, with appropriate consultation with medical and public health experts as well as state and local governments, and with time for businesses to prepare. In addition, we urge the following health measures for this phased restart:

1. Expanded Testing Capacity

We must expand testing capacity to include those who may not be showing symptoms (or “asymptomatic carriers”). This is an important step as more people return to public life. Expanded testing capacity must also come with higher contact tracing and isolation capacity to ensure that the chain of transmission is effectively broken.

2. Encourage Use of Masks

We support the government’s position in encouraging the use of masks in public. However, masks are not a magic solution, and they must go hand-in-hand with regular hand washing or sanitising, avoiding touching the face, physical distancing and other guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Education must be enhanced for this ‘new normality’.

3. A Whole-of-Society Collective Enforcement

It is the collective responsibility of all of society to prevent further spread of Covid-19. The relevant authorities must closely monitor the planning, training, and compliance of movement control guidelines and SOPs, especially in sectors and areas that will be reopening. Visible legal action must be taken against those who break the rules. It is in the self-interest of businesses to act responsibly to ensure the health of employees and customers, and not reopen before the necessary measures are in place. Hotlines for reporting must be in place with enforcement of the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010. Community leaders should be identified, trained and sufficiently prepared to support the public and ensure safe distancing, using Singapore’s model of ‘enforcement ambassadors’.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 is not fully eradicated yet and will not be until a vaccine is developed and a strong public health surveillance system is in place. With any phased restart, the Rakyat, businesses and society firmly become the front-liners. The health of health professionals and resilience of our health system relies on the cooperation of all front-liners. We must remain vigilant and take the necessary precautions to ensure we beat Covid-19.

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Malaysian Health Coalition

45 member organisations & 19 individuals

Full Signature List on myhealthcoalition.org

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