



PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • 29 MAY 2021

Total Lockdown Must Be Supported By Other Measures

The Malaysian Health Coalition supports the need for a two-week total lockdown, and understands the difficult trade-offs from this decision. We call for generous economic support for the Rakyat, strict and fair enforcement of all rules, and a clear post-lockdown strategy.

Additionally, we strongly urge the following:

1. Provide immediate and comprehensive support to the Rakyat

A two-week total lockdown requires immediate and comprehensive support to the Rakyat. This includes food and financial assistance, and mental health support to be directed to vulnerable communities. Swift inter-agency action must be taken to identify such vulnerable groups and the assistance provided must be generous, led by relevant experts with updated data. The government and *Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat* (JKM) must work with existing NGOs who can better identify community needs and perform direct delivery of aid. This aid must be channelled promptly, and a delivery gap of weeks is unacceptable.

2. Create a vertical surge in healthcare and vaccination capacity

We must dramatically surge our healthcare and vaccination capacity. Federal-state and public-private coordination must be strengthened to mobilise and utilise every available resource. The government should implement a longer interval between vaccine doses so that more citizens can be vaccinated sooner. For example, the Pfizer vaccine can be taken six weeks apart as recommended by the [World Health Organization](#), but with increased genomic surveillance (in partnership with universities) to ensure vaccine effectiveness against new variants. We urge the government to rapidly expand human resources by increasing the number and duration of short-term contracts for health professionals and mobilising civil servants from all agencies to support the National Immunisation Programme. The government must also include the Rakyat as active participants by recruiting volunteers, relevant retirees, recent graduates, community leaders and ordinary Malaysians.

3. Expand nationwide testing via targeted and risk-based approaches

We urge the implementation of free, targeted and frequent nationwide Covid-19 testing by utilising rapid antigen tests alongside PCR tests. This is important for rapid and accurate identification of active infections who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. The Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS) system must be strengthened. Expanding testing requires strong public-private coordination. The reporting and management of positive cases between the public and private sectors should be improved.

We urge the implementation of these recommendations to ensure the effectiveness of this total lockdown and to reduce the risk of future lockdowns. We are in an unprecedented crisis, and strong medicine and focused execution are needed.

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

Malaysian Health Coalition

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