

A Word from the President

Firstly, I wish to thank all Exco members, Dr Krishna Kumaran Ramasamy and the MMA secretariat for a truly excellent job organising the Buka Puasa get-together with Ministry of Health (MOH) officials held on 21 April at Seri Pacific, KL. We were indeed honoured to have YB Dato' Sri Dr Adham Bin Baba (Minister of Health), YB Dato Dr Haji Noor Azmi Ghazali (Deputy Minister of Health), and several MOH officials and medical association representatives present at the event.

As mentioned in my welcome speech at the event, we will continue the spirit of engagement with MOH and work more closely together towards achieving the highest standards of healthcare in the country.

I am pleased to note there have also been regular engagements between MMA and PROTECTHEALTH on the private GPs involvement in the National Immunisation Programme's (NIP) Phase 2 and 3. PROTECTHEALTH is the company under MOH to coordinate the rollout of vaccinations by the private healthcare sector.

From a recent update from PPS, certain logistics are in the midst of being ironed out and the rollout is planned for early May. I am indeed delighted to hear that we have a total of 2,500 GPs who have already registered online for the programme and many more have expressed an interest in participating. All GPs will receive training via PROTECTHEALTH for the vaccination programme.

Engaging PROTECTHEALTH to coordinate the private healthcare vaccinations is indeed a welcomed move by MOH as conducting such an extensive vaccination programme will require additional expertise, manpower and resources. We also applaud the move by MOH to link PROTECTHEALTH's online platform to the MySejahtera app which will enable quicker, up to date recording of data.

The rollout of the NIP's Phase 2 has already begun and it is indeed encouraging that registrations to receive the jab are now increasing. MMA will continue to do its part in helping address vaccine hesitancy in the country with hopes there will be increased uptake during this next phase. There is still much to do in educating the public on vaccine efficacy and safety and MMA will provide MOH the needed support in these efforts.

At the time of writing, the average daily cases of COVID-19 are at 2,400 – the number of cases similar to just before the 2nd MCO in January this year. From the look at these figures, we may be heading into a 4th wave. It is indeed worrying as currently, apart from interstate travel, most restrictions under the MCO have been lifted and almost all sectors in the country have been opened.



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YB Dato' Sri Dr Adham Bin Baba using the MySejahtera App



MMA President escorting YB Dato' Sri Dr Adham Bin Baba



YB Dato' Sri Dr Adham Bin Baba and invited guests

“The government allowed Ramadan bazaars to operate under strict SOPs but a number were found non-compliant with poor crowd control.”

The government had also allowed Ramadan bazaars to operate but under strict SOPs. Alarming, a number of these bazaars were found non-compliant with poor crowd control and were issued fines or ordered shut.

In view of these growing concerns, MMA had recommended that the government immediately halt all mass gatherings and consider alternatives such as app-based virtual bazaars or we may continue to see cases rise even further. The education sector was also affected last month with a number of schools forced to close temporarily.

I personally think it was too early to lift restrictions. We should have waited until we achieved and maintained the targeted infectivity rate (R_t) of 0.8 nationwide before relaxing restrictions. On 18 April, the national infectivity rate was at 1.19 with Kelantan reporting the highest at 1.32. It was also reported that public hospitals in Kelantan were overwhelmed and seven districts in the state were placed under MCO.

The government must act with urgency and reintroduce the much needed restrictions to contain the spread or cases can peak during the festive period.

There is also a need to start re-evaluating our approach in managing COVID-19. Lockdowns have been too costly to the country's economy. A more sustainable, long term approach is needed.

Moving forward, there should be more engagement between government and stakeholders.

Lastly, I wish to take this opportunity to wish all our Muslim members Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri! It is my sincere hope that this year's celebrations will be better than last year.

May you all have an enjoyable time celebrating the festive occasion with your loved ones and stay safe! **BMMA**