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A word from the President



MCO in Its 3rd Phase

At the time of writing, we are still in the third phase of the Movement Control Order (MCO) and there are some signs of the curve flattening. As of 20 April 2020, 36 new cases were reported – the lowest in April! The health ministry is hoping to see single digits in new cases by next week. Our recovery rates have also improved to 60.74% of the total number of positive cases.

Malaysia will also soon be boosting its COVID-19 testing capacity with rapid test kits from Korea to help achieve the target of 16,500 COVID-19 tests per day nationwide. The test kits have been approved and a procurement order has been placed after it had met the ministry's accuracy requirement of 84.4% and specificity rate of 100%.

We are also pleased to know that Malaysia will be involved in the “Solidarity” trial – an international effort to test several drugs in treating COVID-19. As reported in the media, the clinical trials on local patients will begin soon. Nine government hospitals would be participating in the clinical trials to use different combinations of remdesivir, lopinavir/ ritonavir, interferon beta, chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine.

The 3rd phase of the MCO also sees the resumption of operations of businesses in several industries listed as ‘essential services’. At the time of writing, 50,000 applications have been received from companies to operate during the third phase of MCO. We are pleased that screening for all workers in these additional sectors are among measures to be taken to curb the spread of COVID-19 as announced by International Trade and Industry minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali. The COVID-19 screening of workers will be conducted by SOCSO at clinics registered with SOCSO. More updates to come on this.

Government's Superb Handling of the COVID-19 Situation

Had it not been for a few bold decisions, we believe the COVID-19 situation would have been far worse in the country than we are seeing today. The decision by the prime minister on the advice of the health ministry to put the whole country on lockdown measures in efforts to flatten the curve must go down as one of the most important decisions ever made in Malaysian history. We believe, had these decisions not been made, the total number of cases would have doubled or perhaps even tripled within a short period of time.

MMA wishes to express its appreciation for the quality of decisions made by the health ministry under the leadership of Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba, Deputy Ministers Dato' Dr Haji Noor Azmi Ghazali, Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang and Health DG Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah. They all played key roles in advising the PM to issue the MCO. We also believe the decisions that followed, to extend the MCO to phase 2 and 3, were also the right calls to make. We wish to thank the entire MOH team for their continuous efforts in fighting this pandemic.

The government had also performed well in its enforcement and monitoring of the MCO under the capable leadership of senior minister Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob who is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring the public's full compliance of the MCO. His team has been working well with MOH and the departments under his ministry had played a key role in helping identify COVID-19 hotspots.

Contract Extensions of Public Healthcare Personnel

On 15 April 2020, the health ministry announced that contracts of medical, dental and pharmaceutical officers in private healthcare will be extended to six months. This is of course, due to the high demand for medical personnel in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this is a welcomed move, it did not address the main problem which is the issue of career continuity and opportunity. SCHOMOS had earlier asked for an extended contract for a total of 10 years for our contract officers to allow for specialisation and gazettement before absorption as permanent staff for successful specialists. We had issued a press statement on this and will be following up. Do look out for updates.

Open Letter to PM

We wish to thank MMA past presidents, in particular Dr Ashok, for the beautifully penned open letter to our Prime Minister delivered ahead of the announcement on the extension of the MCO's 3rd phase. The letter must have made a great impact as it was one of the most read pieces on Malaysiakini online at the time. It was well received by our Prime Minister as I do believe some of our recommendations for the 3rd phase of the MCO were taken into consideration.

Shopee MMA COVID-19 Fund

Up to date, we have managed to raise RM350,685 through this collaboration with Shopee to raise funds for the welfare of healthcare workers battling the COVID-19 pandemic. Donations had poured in from 17,203 generous donors online. We wish to thank Shopee for this excellent CSR partnership and MMA Foundation for their support. Most of all, a big thank you to the kind donors. To our MMA members, do give your support your colleagues in public healthcare by donating to this fund.

Take Care This Month of Ramadhan

This year's month of Ramadhan will be celebrated very differently. The country will still be on MCO and in some areas EMCO (Enhanced MCO) when the fasting month starts on 24 April. We won't be seeing the usual Ramadhan bazaars that have become something that even non-muslims look forward to every year. There were suggestions for E-bazaars and some have even suggested drive-thru bazaars to replace



MMA Exco members paying a courtesy call on Deputy Health Minister YB Dato' Dr Haji Noor Azmi bin Ghazali



MMA Foundation donated RM10,000 to the Tabung COVID-19



Donation of PPEs by well-wishers to MMA, which were then handed over to KL GH

them but really, it wouldn't quite be anywhere close to the Ramadhan bazaars we know.

It is indeed saddening that my Muslim friends will have to celebrate Ramadhan at such a time. Nothing can really replace the feeling of going back to your hometown – something all my Malay friends look forward to each year. Although our Health DG has mentioned that the fight against COVID-19 may take months or even continue to next year unless a vaccine is developed, I sincerely hope that somehow, miraculously, the COVID-19 situation in the country will significantly improve before Hari Raya.

But regardless of the outcome, we must do our best to remain in good health. To all my muslim colleagues, friends and your families – I wish you Good Health for the coming fasting month. Selamat Berpuasa and do take extra care of yourselves!

We also wish to take this opportunity to wish our Health DG Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah who had just turned 57 recently, a belated Happy Birthday!

To all public healthcare colleagues serving in the battle against COVID-19, stay safe!

And finally, to all those celebrating their birthdays in May, I wish you a Happy Birthday!

God bless you all! **BMMMA**