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The Malaysian Government and Economic Situation During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic that hit the world has changed the economic position and government of Malaysian action in general and itself in particular. It not only looks at the economic context of the country but also looks at how the economy of the community itself was during this epidemic. It is done based on the situation that struck and the environmental conditions that can be seen in general. It will also look at how the economic position of individuals who have to change jobs to ensure family survival changes during this pandemic season. In other words, this is not just about national problems but more specifically about the economic position of Malaysian society itself in the face of the Covid-19 epidemic. There are individuals who are still able to survive with this current situation and not least also with individuals who are not able to survive with the pandemic that is plaguing this world. It does not matter whether a person is of high or low status. This study was conducted randomly on the Malaysian community by taking into account the various backgrounds of the community and the economic situation of Malaysia itself. This study also will look at the state of the Malaysian economy during the Covid-19 pandemic in two periods of rule. This can be seen due to the several changes of government leadership for some political reasons. However, all eras of government are active in fighting this pandemic despite the turbulent political issues.

Keyword: Malaysia economic position during pandemic Covid-19, Malaysian Government, Malaysia, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 named by World Health Organization (WHO) appeared as a substantial threat to social protection and public health. In December 2019, this epidemic emerged from Wuhan City, China and spread to the rest of the world. (Elengoe, 2020). A pandemic is defined as "An epidemic occurring worldwide or over an extensive area, crossing international boundaries, and usually affecting a large number of people" (Porta, 2008). Despite causing astonishing fatalities worldwide, the pandemic also affects livelihood, individuals, businesses and industries which changed the world forever (Philip Teoh, 2020).

Malaysia is one of the countries in the world severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic since the end of 2019. The effect can not only be seen in terms of the health of the world community itself but it also has a significant impact on the economy of countries around the world including Malaysia.

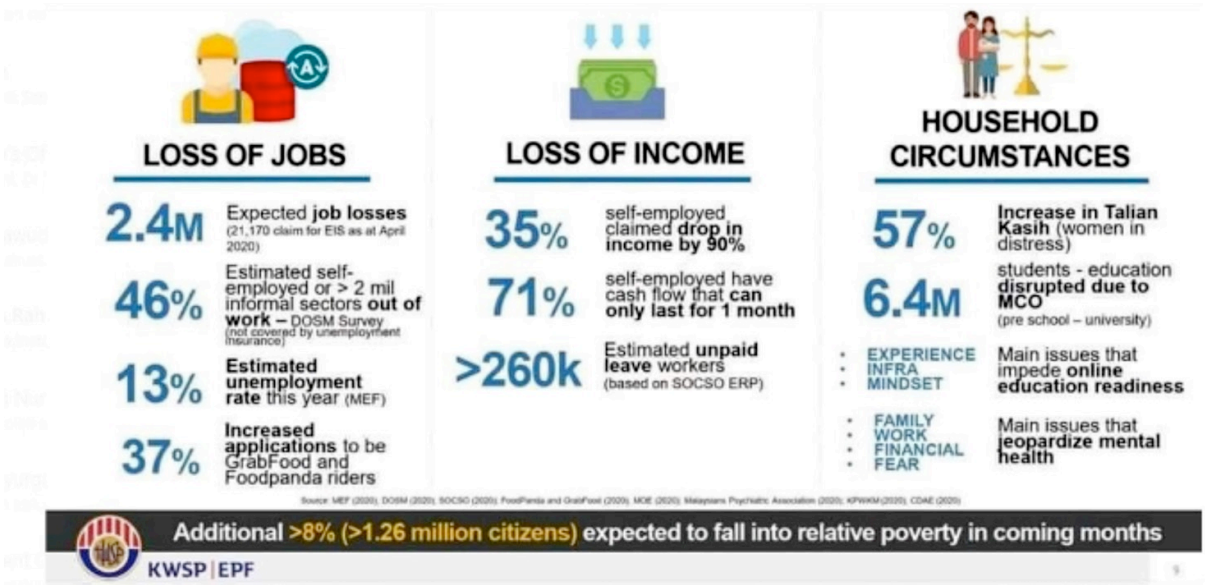

Figure 1: COVID-19 Exposes the GAPS within the Malaysia Social Protection System.

The first Covid-19 case reported in Malaysia was in December 2019 involving three Chinese nationals who entered Malaysia via Johor and all of them were treated at the Sungai Buloh Hospital. It was confirmed by the former Health Minister at the time, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad. In conclusion, this pandemic has started at the end of the era of democratic government under the leadership of the 7th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohammad. It was at this time that the country's economy began to decline due to the paralysis of the world economy which at that time had begun to be affected by this pandemic. The republican government at that time had begun to organize strategies to combat this pandemic but its effectiveness was somewhat less as this pandemic was the first pandemic to hit the world. All the top leaders of the countries around the world involved are still looking for a solution to this pandemic.

It has become a global problem where the Covid-19 pandemic has affected parts of the world economy. Not only small countries but also world powers are also affected by the economic position because there are various economic industries that have to stop operating. After almost 2 years have passed, society needs to adapt to living with this virus in daily life. Life has to go on no matter what the situation. Yet there are various SOPs that need to be adhered to ensure every individual is free from this epidemic.

Many economic industries are affected from 5 -star companies to individuals. Since the emergence of this pandemic, one by one the economic industry players in Malaysia have begun to shrink the size of their industry and not least also with industry players who had to retire because their financial position could not afford the expenses for the company to continue its operations. It has a profound effect on the Malaysian economy itself. This is because at the beginning of the pandemic, the government had to decide to implement the Movement Control Order comprehensively throughout the country. It aims to curb the chain of pandemics that continue to spread in society. All activities and activities are ordered to be stopped except for essential services such as security, health and the sale of basic necessities are allowed to operate. Taking from a news report excerpt from Astro Awani stated that the Chief Executive

Officer of the American-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), Siobhan Das said implementation such as Movement Control Order (MCO)1.0 would cause the infrastructure built since last year to have a severe impact on the national economy. having a long and lasting impact on businesses in the global supply chain. "

Among the industry players that were most affected during this pandemic was the tourism industry. It does not matter whether it is travel agents, players in the accommodation and hotel industry, small traders around the tourism area or employees who are involved in this tourism industry. Many players in the hotel industry were forced to retire because no income came to them to cover the expenses of the industry. The effect was not only on the owners of the industry but even worse, thousands of workers had to be laid off as employers had to suspend their business operations. According to a news report on BHOnline, until August 2021 as many as 120 players in the hotel industry had to stop their hotel operations due to this pandemic. Malaysian Hotel Association (MAH) chief executive officer, Yap Lip Seng, said the industry had suffered a loss of more than RM6.5 billion in revenue in 2020 and possibly another RM9 billion so far this year. Therefore, MAH launched the MAH Cares program, by allocating food aid worth RM200,000 through representatives of state associations to distribute essential items and food supplies to workers in the hotel industry in need. It is to alleviate the burden of workers affected by the closure of this hotel. Holiday Inn Resort in Penang, which has been operating for 40 years, has finally had to come to terms with the current situation of this pandemic. the owner of this hotel has decided to cease its operations. The decision was made after considering various aspects and it involved hundreds of employees.

Travel agents, hotel agents and even airline agents were also affected by the pandemic. No domestic or foreign tourism activities are allowed during the implementation of MCO 0.1. Most of them had to close their operations completely because they did not want to add to the debt burden if they continued to operate. It also involves many employees in it and as a whole is affected by this decision.

Not only the players in the tourism industry, but also the transportation industry are also affected. It doesn't matter if it's land, water or air transportation. MCO 0.1 which was implemented by the government at the beginning of the pandemic has prevented the community from making any movement across the state or district. Individuals are also not allowed to go out to work except in the permitted sector. It really affected the transport industry because no movement was allowed. It includes buses, taxis and similar transportation, ferries and even planes. At the domestic level, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Wee Ka Siong on July 21, 2020 informed the Dewan Rakyat that the country's aviation industry is expected to lose around RM13 billion this year, including a loss of RM10.9 billion incurred by local airline Malaysia Airlines Bhd, AirAsia Group Bhd and Malindo Airways Sdn Bhd. According to him, airport operators such as Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) and Senai Airport Terminal Services Sdn Bhd are expected to record losses amounting to RM2.1 billion this year.

The massive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the airline industry has led many airlines to implement massive capacity reduction approaches, including lowering operating costs, pay cuts, layoffs, debt and corporate restructuring as well as closing subsidiaries. AirAsia terminated the services of more than 10 per cent of its 24,000 employees to ensure survival and the same fate befell 2,200 Malindo Airways employees while Malaysia Aviation Group

(MAG) offers early retirement schemes to employees, including Malaysia Airlines and Firefly employees. Last October, Malaysia Airlines announced immediate restructuring measures involving a debt worth RM16 billion and had contacted creditors as the government would no longer channel any cash or capital through the company's sole shareholder, Khazanah Nasional Bhd.

Airlines are now heavily affected with most being deemed to be in a defensive mode as much as possible in order to stay afloat due to faster-than-expected cash flows as well as to continue to survive until the flight restrictions are lifted. MAHB, for example, recorded a net loss of RM431.17 million in the nine months ended September 30, 2020 compared to a net profit of RM507.53 million for the same period last year, while its revenue dropped to RM1.6 billion from RM3.87 billion previously. AirAsia Group Bhd recorded a net loss of RM2.66 billion in the first nine months of 2020 compared to a net profit of RM80.72 million with its revenue decreasing to RM2.89 billion from RM9.09 billion. Meanwhile, the net loss of its associate, AirAsia X increased to RM1.16 billion in the same period from RM393.67 million previously.

Land transport industry players are also affected. Taxi and Grab Car services, for example, they have to bear high losses because no income has been earned since MCO 0.1 was implemented. These people who are completely dependent on this income are severely affected. This is because no movement is allowed by the government. This has a huge impact on them. The same goes for water transport such as ferries. Its operation had to be stopped because no movement activities were allowed. This also affects the income of the industry players and their employees.

In global side, Corona virus outbreak in China was additionally suspected to have an effect on Indonesian agricultural exchange. for the duration of this time the export of palm oil is one of the largest export members to China. however, in February 2020, the realization simplest reached 84,000 tonnes. This discern is very some distance while in comparison with the previous month's cognizance of January 2020 of 487,000 tons and in the equal period of 2019 that reached 371,000 heaps (Detik.com, 2020).

In addition, many individuals are affected as a result of many companies having to reduce the size of their company's operations, not least, some have also had to close their operations. As a result, many workers had to be laid off. Many lose their source of income as a result of the decision. the company could not afford to cover all the expenses and as a result the superiors had to decide to stop operations and some had to lay off some of its employees due to the downsizing of the company's operations. Some of them were compensated and some were only given consolation because the company could not afford to provide appropriate compensation. However, in this pandemic situation, they are able to adapt to the current situation. This is because not only small companies but also large companies are also affected and not only the individual economy but also the national economy is also severely affected.

Beginning in July 2020, the pandemic situation is getting better. The reported cases began to show a decline and once recorded a blank of cases. At this point, the government has decided to open the restrictions that have been made. The community can work as usual, can cross districts and states and all activities can be implemented but according to SOPs set by the government except no movement out of the country is allowed for tourism purposes and no

tourists from abroad are allowed to enter Malaysia for that purpose. It gives a sigh of relief to the whole community because they can live life as usual. This can also to some extent help restore the country's economy.

But starting in early 2021, this pandemic began to strike again. The sharp increase in cases is very worrying. Death after death is recorded daily. As of 31 December 2020, Malaysia has closed the curtain on 2020 with 2525 new Covid-19 cases. Currently, the total number of cases is 113,010 cases and the total number of active cases with Covid-19 infectious rate is 23,598 cases. The number of deaths reported that day was 8 cases. But by 2021, the number of infected is increasing. In 2021, the highest number of new Covid-19 cases is on 26 August 2021 which is 24, 599 cases. the death toll also rose to 393 cases. Today on 14 September 2021, the declining figure began to show which was 15,669 cases reported. The Ministry of Health Malaysia stated that 98.2% of cases were from categories 1 and 2 while only 1.8% of cases involved categories 3, 4 and 5. The rate of use of breathing aids also decreased.

In a journal made by a group of students from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) titled role of stakeholders in safeguarding the welfare of the people's economy during the Pandemic of the Covid-19 from the perspective of the Islamic economy has discussed the impact of this pandemic to the people's economy. As a result of the study found that many people were affected by the economy as a result of this pandemic. This causes the country's economy to be affected.

A more targeted study was conducted by a group of students from the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accounting at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. It regarded the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic against household income sources and case studies was conducted in Semporna Sabah. They use quantitative research methods. Results and findings have found that most of the economic sectors in Semporna are highly affected during the implementation of the Movement Control Order (PKP). Semporna consists of a tourism sector comprising security guards, management staff and cleaning and supervisors. Subsequently, the retail sector (salespeople, traders and retailers), hospitality, services and others are among the examples of industries that are clearly affected in this area. Most of the affected workers are among private workers while public workers in the services sector are less affected.

GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This Covid -19 pandemic has lasted for almost 2 years. Many individuals continue to be affected and not least also those who are still able to get on with life by having to change habits with new ones. Many workers had to be laid off and had to find other livelihoods as income in order to survive. Aware of the plight of the people, the Malaysian government has given some assistance to the people to support themselves and ease the burden of the people. Although at the same time the Malaysian Government has to face the worsening economic situation but the people remain a priority for the government. At the same time, Malaysia is facing a political crisis involving various parties in the government. But in the end Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin was officially elected and approved by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong as the new Prime Minister of Malaysia and lined up by a new cabinet member. It was at this time that the new government began to formulate plans and strategies to deal with this pandemic as well as restore the economic situation of the country and the people. After the end of MCO 1.0 on May 3, 2020, the government decided not to implement a 'total lockdown' like MCO 1.0 at this time because it

will affect the lives of the people and it will cause more people to lose their jobs. "If you ask me personally, PKP is completely the best and guaranteed safe and easy for the government and MOH to manage but the impact of the closure on the economy is huge," he said in the Covid-19 Pandemic Challenge Special program with the Prime Minister broadcast on Radio Televisyen Malaysia. (RTM) and Bernama TV on Sunday night. According to the Prime Minister, the consideration between life and life must be taken into account in deciding on the implementation of the MCO to ensure that the people are not badly affected by the measures taken by the government. Indeed, if you follow me, the MOH says it is the best but the effect on the country, if the people do not work, the economy has collapsed to redevelop (like MCO 1.0), "*I (government) have to spend RM340 billion with six stimulus packages. That is not a small amount, it has never happened in the country. Twenty percent of our country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is used to help the people. This is what the people must understand. If we do so we will face bigger problems, then the country will not can want to get up*" he said. Muhyiddin said the closure of all economic sectors during MCO 1.0 on March 18 to May 3, 2020, to curb the spread of Covid-19 not only caused the country to lose about RM2.4 billion every day, but many people lost their jobs as well as small traders.

Dewan Pemuda Ikatan Malaysia (DPIM) would like to touch on the implications of Covid-19 to the national economy in particular. Among the indicators of the level of health of the local economy that can be used are the pioneer index (IP) or leading index and the consumer price index (CPI) or consumer price index. This IP shows the annual growth rate and local business cycle, which directly shows the implications of Covid-19 to the domestic economy. The consumer price index shows the purchasing power of the people and the implications of Covid-19 on the country's inflation rate. Based on the latest report from the Department of Statistics Malaysia, IP declined further to negative 5.5 percent. Prolonged disruptions in the economy continue to affect IP performance. On a year -on -year basis, IP declined further to a negative 5.5 per cent in April 2020 from a negative 3.6 per cent in March 2020 driven by negative contributions from the number of residential units approved for construction and the number of new companies registered. This situation shows that the construction sector is collapsing badly because there is no demand, while no new business is generated because each of them is struggling to save existing companies from closing down. However, there was some positive momentum recorded by the expected sales value in the manufacturing sector which contributed 2.1 per cent to the change in the percentage of IP in the reference month as businesses were allowed to resume operations in May 2020. DPIM supported the government's decision to open space to the economic sector during the Movement Control Order. Conditional (PKPB) and now the Rehabilitation Movement Control Order (PKPP) for the country's economy to recover without compromising the people's security against the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking into account the weaker annual performance of IP, it is expected that the economy will remain in a contractionary trajectory in the coming months. The CPI declined 2.9 per cent in May 2020 to 117.9 from 121.4 in the same month a year earlier. The decline in the overall CPI was driven by declines in the indices of transport (-20.8%), housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels (-2.6%), clothing & footwear (-1.1%) and household decoration, appliances and maintenance (-0.2%) which accounted for 45.7 percent of the total weightage. However, food and non - alcoholic beverages continued to increase in May 2020 by 1.2 per cent to 134.3 compared with 132.7 in the same month a year earlier. This group accounts for 29.5 per cent of the overall weighted CPI. Various goods and services also showed an increase of 2.8 per cent followed by communication (1.6%), health (1.2%) and education (1.0%). Consumer price index (CPI) data

and statistics clearly show that people are now frugal in spending and only spend for personal and family survival for basic necessities like food and drink. It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected the Malaysian economy, especially the global economy. According to Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM), Malaysia's 1Q 2020 GDP declined to 0.7% due to the impact of actions taken, both globally and domestically to curb the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic. Overall GDP growth for 2020 is expected to be as low as -4.7%. Finance Minister Zafrul Abdul Aziz mentioned that the country's fiscal deficit would almost double, increasing to around 6% of annual economic output by 2020 due to funding in government aid projects related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Economic recovery depends on the public and private sectors being dynamically interconnected, for the social and economic good of the country. During the MCO alone, 66% of businesses experienced a drastic decline in demand that made it difficult to maintain existing businesses. The Malaysian Government has proactively taken many initiatives to stimulate and boost the economy, as well as boost the economy in the private sector, such as the Caring Economic Stimulus Package and the Generator plan. Concerns are expected to contribute 2.8% to GDP growth. International agencies forecast Malaysia's GDP growth of between 4.7% and 9%, with public health conditions under control.

In 2021, the Malaysian economy will begin to grow in the second quarter of this year. The Malaysian economy has started to grow by 16.1%. This indicates a positive and very good change to the situation of the Malaysian economy which has been in a rather dire situation for so long. In the first quarter of 2021, the country's GDP recorded a contraction of 0.5 %, while economic growth in the overall first half of this year was 7.1 %. Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Governor Datuk Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus said economic performance was supported mainly by improved domestic demand and continued strong export performance in 2021. He said the strong growth also reflected a low base due to declining activity. significant in the second quarter of 2020. This is what the former Prime Minister said that PKP 1.0 has had a huge impact on the country as the entire economic sector had to be shut down. For the GDP performance of the second quarter of 2021 for Malaysia, all sectors of the economy recorded an increase, especially the manufacturing sector. In terms of expenditure, growth was driven by higher private sector spending and strong trade activity. Society has begun to become accustomed to the new norms and many sectors have begun to open up. It revives the long gloomy Malaysian economy.

Since the pandemic occurred and dragged on, the Malaysian government has provided the people with various assistance to alleviate the burden that had to be borne as a result of the pandemic. The assistance is a bit like giving relief to the people, especially those who have lost their source of income. The assistance is comprehensive, it includes households, singles and also assistance to affected traders. the concerns of the people affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic crisis are being heard by the government, by providing various ongoing assistance channeled through the People's Protection and Economic Recovery Package (PEMULIH). The RM150 billion economic stimulus package, which includes the government's direct fiscal injection of RM10 billion, was announced by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin on June 28. The campaign provides comprehensive assistance to all segments of the people from the B40 Poor, B40, M40 to T20. The assistance through the Ministry of Finance (MOF) aims to help ease the burden of the people during the challenging period in fighting the pandemic, in line with the National Recovery Plan (PPN) initiative.

The assistance received has been well utilized by the people. Most gratifying is when there are individuals who use the assistance given to start a small business due to loss of source of income after losing the source of income due to job loss. Many communities have started businesses since this pandemic occurred. This is able to improve the economy of the community itself and indirectly it will help the government to build and restore the country's economy. After nearly two years of struggling with this pandemic, little by little the country's economy began to recover.

Most states in Malaysia have moved on to Phase 2 of the National Recovery Plan. Cross -district activities have begun to be allowed. No more travel restrictions between districts. This allows the people to move a little more freely with the SOPs that have been set. The community has begun to be allowed to make tourism activities in the state including activities such as recreation on the beach and the like. Since the announcement was made by the government, players in the tourism industry have started to revitalize. Many resorts have lived as usual. Traders and other industry players have started operating little by little. Most recently, on 16 September 2020, the government opened Langkawi Island as a pilot project to reopen the tourism sector to the local community. However, strict SOPs have been set to ensure that there is no transmission of Covid-19 as a result of the opening of the pilot project. This can to some extent help tourism -related industry players regenerate their income after being affected for so long. It will indirectly contribute to the overhaul of the country's economy. In the future, the government has considered opening more tourism centers in stages. However, the people still have to abide by the SOPs that have been set. The Malaysian government has also made the assumption that the country's economy will begin to recover little by little and is expected to recover as usual in the future.

The State Statistics Department in an article titled News and Issues Current Impact of Covid-19 to Economics (Reference 22-25 January 2021) has gathered several issues related to COVID-19 countries that occurred in Malaysia. The issue was taken from various sources such as printed press, online newspapers and some statements issued by its own authorities. All the issues collected provide the findings of the Government's efforts in reviving the economy of the people and the country affected by the spread of this pandemic.

In August 2021, Malaysia once again faced turmoil in the political arena. It stems from the loss of trust from the cabinet line-up which denies the ability of the 8th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Muhyiddin bin Yassin in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. This is due to the increase in new cases and the increase in deaths due to the virus. A vote of no confidence began to be made and the 8th Prime Minister officially handed over the official letter of resignation as Prime Minister of Malaysia to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah on 16 August 2021. He accepted and consented the letter. On 20 August 2021, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah has agreed to appoint Umno Vice President, Yang Berhormat Dato 'Sri Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob as the 9th Prime Minister of Malaysia to replace Tan Sri Muhyiddin bin Yassin. It is in line with Article 40 (2) (a) and Article 43 (2) (a) of the Federal Constitution. This in turn has formed a new cabinet republic with some portfolios retained and some portfolios replaced with new leadership. The cabinet that was formed also received the consent of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah before being announced to the people.

After the formation of the new leadership republic, the government became more active in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not only to ensure that this pandemic can be controlled but at the same time to ensure that the country's economic condition continues to recover and return to normal. The National Recovery Plan (NRP) continues to be actively implemented. Currently, no other state in Malaysia is in phase 1 of NRP. All states have moved on to phases 2, 3 and 4. Flexibility has been given but there are still some SOPs that need to be adhered to by the people. The government under the 9th Prime Minister has allowed the relaxation to be granted following the drop in new Covid-19 cases. This is also to ensure that the Malaysian economy can be restored little by little. This economic recovery will benefit the people as well as help Malaysia achieve the long -planned RMK agenda. The table below shows the states by phase.

Phase 1	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**
	Kedah Pulau Pinang Perak Kelantan Johor Sabah	WP Kuala Lumpur WP Putrajaya Selangor Melaka Perlis Pahang Terengganu Sarawak	Negeri Sembilan WP Labuan

State According to The National Recovery Plan Phase

The national vaccination program is also in full swing. Now the country has almost reached 90% of the adult population complete with vaccines. These efforts enable the country's economy to reopen and improve the economic situation of the people and the country. Various more concessions will be made when the people have been fully vaccinated. It gives a sigh of relief to economic industry players because after so long struggling with this pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The Health Ministry said the pandemic would soon be declared endemic. At that time, society needs to live with this virus. However, the government will ensure that the community complies with all SOPs even if they have been declared endemic. The government took the decision because almost the entire population of Malaysia has been vaccinated. It is also to ensure that the community can return to normal life as well as to restore the economy of the community and the country. Various plans have been drawn up to ensure that the country's economy continues to recover to ensure the well -being of the people. Therefore, we as a caring society also need to play a role in helping the government face this economic crisis and pandemic. A strong economic position for a country is very necessary to ensure that the economy of a country's society is always in the best condition.

The whole world experienced a national economic downturn during this pandemic, but the wisdom of the government and the full cooperation of the community to some extent can help the efforts to revive this economy succeed. Malaysia, which is also affected, needs to do the same. With the gradual opening of various industries in this National Recovery Plan, we are confident that the Malaysian economy can survive and recover as usual. A pandemic like this is an unforeseen situation. The whole world is not ready to face this pandemic. However, this pandemic has opened the eyes of all and the world that such unforeseen situations can occur

and wise management from the relevant parties is very important in dealing with these unforeseen situations. This event will remain in history and will always be stored in the folds of history. Fighting without weapons turns out to be more painful and more difficult. Cooperation from all parties is very important and will determine whether it can be overcome or not. Bureaucracy in politics does not occasionally restrain the government's efforts to ensure that this pandemic end and continues to work to restore the country's economic situation. The system of constitutional democracy continues to be maintained and every elected leader continues to ensure that efforts for the well -being of the people remain at the forefront.

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