

‘Political stability, vaccination and obedience to SOPs the way forward against Covid-19’

PETALING JAYA: Maintaining political stability in Malaysia is critical during times of crisis as any volatility would not benefit any party but instead set the nation back from making good progress in the fight against Covid-19.

Concerned by the uncertain political situation during the pandemic, MEF President Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. has called on all concerned parties to prioritise the lives and livelihoods of the *rakyat*, instead of lobbying for political support.

“MEF is an apolitical organisation that seeks to promote good business environment and favourable conditions to grow businesses, attract investments and create employment opportunities for the *rakyat*,” he said.

“Towards this end, we require a government that has the business community and *rakyat* at heart.

“The country needs political stability during this pandemic and having new leaders taking over the management of Covid-19 may not sit well as they may require more time before they act, whereas we need fast action.”

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain said that the present government was doing its best under pandemic circumstances with the Prime Minister and Ministers from the MOF, MOH, MOSTI and MOHR working together to manage the issues.

“It is impossible to do battle on two major fronts at the same time with the Covid-19 crisis and also the *rakyat* crisis that had been caused by the prolonged lockdown.

“We must urgently open up the economy with strict focus on affected sections of the industry so that the *rakyat* can earn a living.

“The WHO (World Health Organisation) has also recommended governments to avoid implementing lockdown as a measure to manage Covid-19 due to its devastating consequences.

“We urge the government to focus on Covid-19 management because trying to do both at the same time is impossible.

“These challenges are real and as the Covid-19 situation is very dynamic, fast-changing strategies that are fluid, flexible and practical need to be put in place from time to time.

“To ensure effectiveness, industry stakeholders, professional medical practitioners, as well as other experts must be involved in making the strategies so that the focus areas are targeted and action plans implemented.

“The generic approach would not work in this fast-changing environment and we must accept that Covid-19 is here to stay. We have to learn to live with Covid-19 as it is already endemic.”

He said the way forward that had thus far proved to be effective was through vaccination and strict compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

“We understand that the government is trying their best to secure the vaccines but in reality, we cannot get all the vaccines that we require or as fast as we want it because Malaysia is not a vaccine producing nation,” he said.

“We have to wait for approval and the vaccines purchased are only those allowed by the WHO.

“Furthermore, the vaccines can only be bought on a G-to-G basis putting them out of reach of the private sector employers.

“These limitations are delaying the government’s efforts to mass vaccinate the *rakyat*, and not forgetting those who have vaccine hesitancy.

“In the long term, MEF has requested that the government sets up Malaysia’s own vaccine research centre to produce vaccines locally, and we are pleased that the government has viewed this positively and taking appropriate action.”

He said for the SOPs to be effective while ensuring survivability of business and livelihoods, efforts should be focussed on industries and workplaces with high risk of infections.

“The government and industry must be able to work together as a team to coordinate efforts to maintain and update SOPs and support the inoculation programme.

“The *rakyat* must also change their behaviour and strictly follow the SOPs as the prolonged lockdown has now done more harm to the *rakyat* than the pandemic.

“Even with two doses of vaccines only prevents severe illness and provides no guarantee of full protection against infection.

“The *rakyat* must fulfil this role seriously and learn to understand Covid-19 so that we know how to manage properly and not leave everything to the government, and we thank the government for all that had been done.

“In moving forward, we call on the *rakyat* to eliminate all fears of Covid-19 and be brave to embrace the new world that is now before us in the hope of a better future for all.”

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