

MCO 3.0 AND TOURISM.

Wisma MAH, Ampang (8 May 2021) – The tourism and hotel industry is again left helpless as various states fall into another round of Movement Control Order (MCO) and this time around it came right in the middle of the holy month of Ramadan when hotels are busy preparing for the coming Hari Raya holidays and serving the once a year festival buffet for breaking fast. Last year in 2020 the hotel industry lost at minimum RM135 million in food & beverage revenues as it was MCO for the entire fasting month.

The industry understands the need for restrictions to be in place but believes that there is room for improvements in balancing lives vs livelihood. Hotels were already badly impacted with the extended interstate travel restrictions and now even RMCO to RMCO travel has been suspended. Since the beginning of Ramadan, hotels had adjusted its breaking fast buffets to the new norm, with added SOPs in place to ensure hygiene and safety of guests.

The blanket ban on dine-in left hotels in predicament with only days to reorganise what was planned for the entire month. Hotels are not only left with excess supplies of perishables but also committed manpower for the period. The government did not offer any support or assistance leaving hotels high and dry with cancellations pouring in for room bookings planned for Hari Raya holidays.

With the current situation that cuts off all revenue streams, industry is willing to impose stricter SOPs such as lower capacity limit, served-buffet service or limit of two per table, increased screening and even mandatory testing for hotel guest from another state or district checking-in. Government needs to consider these options before imposing blanket bans, to allow the industry to at least survive on its own.

“We have seen similar situation in other countries and the governments there provides subsidies to businesses for losses due to the inability to operate, in accordance to either business hours affected or volume, whichever applicable,” said Dato N Subramaniam, President of the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH).

Looking at the deteriorating situation that will likely be extended, Malaysia needs to plan ahead with a systematic subsidy system for businesses affected by the MCO.

“The government must also speed up vaccination plans especially for economic frontliners like hoteliers and find ways to procure more vaccines. At the current rate, it is highly unlikely that Malaysia will achieve herd immunity any time soon,” he added.

With the recent increase in cases, the government would need to consider commencing mass testing and isolating those tested positive to prevent further spread. While the MCO is needed, it does not address or prevent spread from asymptomatic persons that would only multiply with time.

The tourism and hotel industry is committed support the government to contain the spread of Covid-19.