

Environmental Health Officers and  
Assistant Environmental Officers  
Malaysia

COVID-19 Pandemic Report

Presented by  
Malaysian Association of  
Environmental Health

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## **I. Malaysia's Planning and Preparedness**

1. Malaysia's preparedness and planning began in December 2019, when they first received information from the Chinese authorities that there were cases of acute respiratory illness.
2. Aided with previous experience from Middle East Respiratory Syndrome related Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), the 2002-2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic and experienced contact tracing teams, Malaysia was able to initiate a speedy response.
3. Malaysia drastically upgraded health facilities and diagnostics capacity in February 2020, including an 86% increment in diagnostics laboratory capacity, 89% increment in critical care bed capacity, and an 49% increase in the number of available ventilators (from 526 to 1034 units).
4. Malaysia hospitalised all individuals diagnosed as COVID-19 positive, whether symptomatic and asymptomatic.
5. Learning from other countries, including China was essential in identifying do's and don'ts in the COVID-19 response, including in terms of treatment.
6. While evidence on treatments was still unclear, Malaysian physicians prioritised monitoring for negative side-effects of treatments and adjusted medication regimens.

## **II Chronology of event during COVID-19 Outbreak in Malaysia**

### **1. At the end of December 2019**

Chinese public health authorities reported several cases of acute respiratory syndrome precipitated by an 'unknown virus' in Wuhan, China was reported by the Chinese public health authorities. The Malaysian health authorities were put on high alert and planning and preparedness began then, including coordination with public health teams including screening of travellers into the country (border control), plans for renovation of hospitals for surge capacity, and plans for procurement of reagents

### **2. 23 January 2020**

Eight Chinese nationals entering Malaysia via Johor Bahru on Malaysia's Southern border with Singapore were screened and tested for COVID-19 when three of these travellers had tested positive for COVID-19. In total, 22 cases were recorded in January 2020, all of which occurred via imported cases.

### **3. 09 March 2020**

Malaysia received notification from the nation of Brunei about a positive COVID-19 case detected there who have attended a mass religious gathering involving more 14,500 Malaysian and 1,500 foreign participants at a mosque in Kuala Lumpur between 27 February

to 1 March 2020. With this, a serious concern of a more massive COVID-19 outbreak was triggered. Epidemiological investigations and mass screenings was started for all the participants of the mass religious gathering.

#### **4. 18 March 2020**

By the middle of March more than half of the 673 confirmed cases were linked to this mass religious gathering. With the increasing number of COVID-19 cases reported domestically and the prediction of exponential increase in the number of cases following the religious gathering the government had decided to impose a lockdown to flatten the epidemic curve. This was implemented by imposing a Movement Control Orders (MCO) under the provisions of the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Acts 1967.

The following are the various phases of the MCO:

- Phase 1 - Movement Control Order (MCO) from 18th till 31st March 2020
- Phase 2 - Movement Control Order (MCO) from 01st till 14th April 2020
- Phase 3 - Movement Control Order (MCO) from 15th till 28th April 2020
- Phase 4 - Movement Control Order (MCO) from 29th till 3rd May 2020

These phases were implemented with the strict actions recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to effectively contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Phase 5 - Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) from 4th till 11th May 2020
- Phase 6 - Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) from 12th May 2020 till 9th June 2020

Among the activities allowed under the CMCO:-

- ~ most economic sectors and activities are allowed to operate while observing the business standard operation procedures such as social distancing and recording the names and telephone numbers of customers and the dates of their visit;
  - ~ sports activities involving large gatherings, body contact and other risks of infection are not allowed, including all indoor and stadium sports events. Outdoor sports activities which do not involve body contact, in small groups without an audience and involving not more than 10 persons are allowed on the condition that social distancing is practised;
  - ~ social, community, religious and cultural events which involve large gatherings as well as all types of official events and assemblies are not permitted;
  - ~ interstate travel, are not allowed except for work purposes.
- Phase 7 - Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) from 10th June till 31st August 2020

The activities permitted under the RMCO in addition to the activities allowed under CMCO are:

- ~ almost all economic sectors and activities are allowed to operate while observing the business standard operation procedures (SOPs) such as social distancing and recording the names and telephone numbers of customers and the dates of their visit;
- ~ barber shops are allowed to open with specific SOPs.
- ~ public and recreational parks are opened to the public
- ~ schools are allowed to reopen subject with strict SOPs
- ~ social, community, religious and cultural events which involve large gatherings as well as all types of official events and assemblies are permitted with compliance to SOPs
- ~ seminars, trainings, workshops and meetings allowed with strict adherence to SOPs
- ~ interstate travel, are allowed.

### **III The responsibilities of Environmental Health Officers and Assistant Environmental Health Officers during the COVID-19**

In Malaysia there are currently more than 5000 EHOs employed in the Ministry of Health and about 2000 EHOs in the Local Authorities. All these officers are gazetted as Authorised Officers under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Disease Act 1988.

Among the responsibilities and duties of the EHO's are:

1. Screenings of travellers at the borders (air, land and sea)
2. Conducting investigation of reported cases and clusters of new cases
3. Performing contact tracings of people who have been exposed or have contacts with suspected and positive cases.
4. Monitoring of Quarantine centres (EH requirements)
5. Monitoring of persons under surveillance (PUS) or self-quarantined at their homes
6. Supervising mass disinfection in premises and public areas
7. Supervising the burials of all death due to COVID-19
8. Enforcing of the requirements of Lockdowns (Mass Movement Control Phases)
9. Food safety monitoring in food premises and quarantine centres
10. Monitoring the compliances of SOPs during the various phases of Movement Control Orders
11. Enforcement of the provisions under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Disease Act 1988.
12. Conduct prosecution for COVID-19 related offences under the Act



Monitoring compliance of SOP's at a wet market



Inspecting food premises for SOP compliance



Monitoring person under self-quarantine at home



Inspecting documents for SOP compliances



Coordinating activities in Outbreak Operation Room



Supervising mass disinfection activities



Supervising mass screening of contacts



Screening incoming travellers at the border



Supervising burial of COVID-19 victim



Inspecting compliance of SOPs at worksite

#### IV Current COVID-19 Situation in Malaysia

	As at 12.00 pm, 7 July 2020	Total	%
1	Confirmed cases	8,674	100
2	Recovered cases	8,481	97.77
3	Total deaths	121	1.39
4	New cases	6	Local : 2 Imported : 4
5	New recovered cases	5	
6	New death	0	
7	Active cases	72	0.83
8	Cases still in ICU	2	

Source : Ministry of Health Malaysia