

RMCO extension necessary as Covid-19 remains a threat

Yanus Yussop

BINTULU: The proposed extension of the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) by the Ministry of Health (MoH) is seen as a right move as Covid-19 is still a major health threat.

A resident here Francis Ngu believes that with still no sign indicating the end of the pandemic, it is still not the right time to end the RMCO.

"It must be extended because we are not in a safe zone at the moment, with more imported cases being recorded here," said the 44-year-old when asked about the ministry's call for the extension of the RMCO beyond the Aug 31 deadline.

The recommendation, according to Minister of Health Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba, is based upon the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s forecast of the Covid-19 pandemic to last for at least two years.

On Sunday, Sarawak recorded three new positive cases, which traced back to the Alam Cluster in Bintulu.

In this regard, Ngu highlighted the need for the relevant authorities to run strict and comprehensive management of the arrival of commercial vessels at Bintulu Port.

"We cannot take these imported cases lightly because all those positive Covid-19 patients are being treated in Bintulu Hospital," he said.

Expressing a similar sentiment, Universiti Putra Malaysia Bintulu Campus lecturer Dr Mohamad Maulana Magiman viewed the proposed extension of the RMCO as 'a good idea', as there were still some people who were being dismissive of the need to adhere to the set standard operating procedures (SOPs) like proper physical distancing and the



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Francis Ngu

wearing of face masks in crowded public places.

Asked about his thoughts on the Alam Cluster, he said it was just an isolated cluster that struck a vessel.

"The health screening, as directed by the government, seems to be the best way of managing and controlling the situation at an early stage," said the 52-year-old academician.

Another local resident Frances Sherri Lia Jilan, 34, also welcomed the ministry's proposal to extend the RMCO.

"We would not know exactly when the spread of Covid-19 will end.

"The recommendation to extend the RMCO is based on the current trend of new cases and also the risks of the second wave of Covid-19 infections.

Asked about the Alam Cluster, Frances called upon fellow Bintulu folk to place their trust in MoH and its teams.

"Let the personnel do the necessary tasks and procedures," she added.



Dr Mohamad Maulana Magiman



Chin Chee Fui

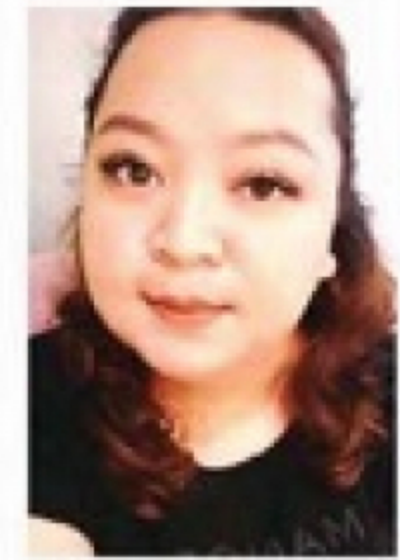
Meanwhile, Chin Chee Fui regarded the identification of the new Covid-19 strains as a strong factor to necessitate the extension of the RMCO.

"Until there is a vaccine found, there must be no reluctant attitude; nobody can take things for granted in terms of SOPs meant to prevent further spread of Covid-19," said the Federation of Registered Chinese Associations (Forca) Bintulu president.

Adding on, he opined that the latest stage of the movement control order had less adverse impact on the economy than the earlier MCO and Conditional MCO.

Still, he stressed that all SOPs must continue to be upheld to prevent the emergence of more new clusters.

"International inbound or interstate travellers, be they (Malaysian) citizens or foreigners, should undergo strict quarantine, and testing should be performed on them several times before their release from quarantine.



Frances Sherri Lia Jilan

"Anyone who breaks the rules should be heavily punished as such action is similar to murder and putting other people's lives at risk," he said.

On the Alam Cluster, Chin said despite it being classified as imported cases deriving from a tanker vessel berthed here, he also believed that some of the crew members must be locals.

"The ship's agents must take full precautions in handling the arrival of vessels, and if there's any suspicious symptom, it should be reported immediately to the MoH, or the State Disaster Management Committee.

"Let the medical personnel handle the suspected patients, instead of using private or company's transport to send them for medical treatment, especially during this Covid-19 period," he said, adding that the MoH should also be concerned about the entry of passengers via flights and also land, especially through the borders.

Stating his opinion, Lyokarto Sikong believed that the MoH must have a strong reason for it to propose the RMCO extension.

"Based on my observation, the majority of the people have already adapted to the new norms, in line with the set SOPs," he said the 37-year-old.

On the Alam Cluster, Lyokarto believed that the relevant authorities had responding effectively to the situation.