



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang
檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயன்பட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Websites
Bahasa: www.pengguna.org.my
English: www.consumer.org.my
Chinese: www.cap.org.my

Press Statement

7 December 2020

Covid-19 pandemic is a psychological time-bomb

Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) is very concerned about Covid-19 pandemic's impact on people's mental health as suicide cases are increasing since the start of the Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020.

According to media reports, Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) statistics showed that 266 people committed suicide between 18 March and 30 October 2020. Within the same period Covid-19 death count in Malaysia (including foreign nationalities) was 249. Hence, the number of suicide deaths was equivalent to 94 per cent of Covid-19 fatality.

Suicide cases were attributed to debt problems being the largest contributing factor followed by family issues and domestic disputes. The feeling of helplessness under the pandemic situation is not unique to Malaysians. A recent report revealed that more than 40 migrant workers had taken their own lives.

The general feeling of helplessness from dealing with losing jobs, reduced income, incurred debt, or someone in the family dying from the disease are some of the causes as there is a lingering uncertainty as when the pandemic is going to end.

Moreover, there is a need for behavioural modifications to adapt to a 'new normal' such as social distancing, wearing a mask, washing of hands, and avoidance of crowded places. In psychology, long-term behaviour change is one of the toughest challenges.

We propose that the government to:

- Disseminate information about signs of stress and depression that can lead to suicidal tendencies.
- Request family members or friends to help the person in crisis to reach out to established hotlines offering counselling services.
- Publicise a list of such governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations' hotlines.
- Encourage embassies and consulates to have their own dedicated hotlines, at least during the pandemic, so that documented or undocumented foreign workers can reach out for help.

It is not a good sign if the number of suicide cases is almost equal or more than those who died from Covid-19. The government should help to disseminate the required information in preventing suicide in the widest and most accessible way rather than depending on printed media which has a limited reach.

MOHIDEEN ABDUL KADER

President Marketing Section: 10 Jalan Padang Tembak, 11400 Air Itam, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8283511 Fax: 604-8268106