



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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**Press statement**

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## **Emergency economic measures for Malaysia**

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) calls upon the government to take measures in helping the people cope with the current economic situation, worsened by the current Covid-19 epidemic. It was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March that Covid-19 can be "characterized as a pandemic".

The epidemic raging on in more than 110 countries and territories, with the number of cases doubling every five to seven days globally is of prime concern. WHO attributed the rapid spread to the "alarming levels of inaction" by the countries affected.

With the fast-changing economic landscape, the 'RM20 billion economic stimulus package' announced in late February is not enough to address the needs of the people. Malaysia's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which constitute 98.5 per cent of businesses and contribute up to 37 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be greatly impacted by Covid-19's effects on tourism industry and the disruption to the supply chain. Given this situation, the government should impose a moratorium on debt payment as a means to mitigate the consequences.

There is also a need to ban all 'non-essential' events and public gatherings because these are highly potential places to spread the infection. One recent case is the spread of Covid-19 to at least 12 persons who were linked to a three-day gathering of Islamic missionaries at a mosque in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. The event was attended by about 10,000 people from several countries, about half of whom are Malaysians. The Health Ministry (MoH) is tracking the 5,000 attendees from all over the country, putting a strain on MoH's limited resources. This could have been averted if the people had been more responsible.

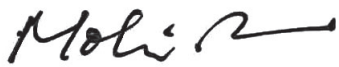
The government should also close tourist attractions as they, too, would be a place of transmission of the virus. With tourists' presence, there will be businesses to serve the tourism sector and they will inadvertently help to spread the infection. The government should cancel the 'Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020' campaign to avoid risking the health of Malaysians in times.

The other point is that the one-week school holiday is to start from 14 March. The Education Ministry should consider extending the school holiday by another week, making it two weeks instead of one. Holiday should also be considered for institutions for higher learning, preschool, and childcare centres. It should be emphasised that children at pre-school and childcare centres are highly susceptible to infections.

Hence, CAP calls upon the government to take decisive action to curb the spread of Covid-19 by:

- Imposing a moratorium on debt payment.
- Ban large gatherings and avoid hosting 'non-essential' events.
- Close tourist attractions.
- Extend the current school holiday by a week and close institutes of higher learning, preschool, and childcare centres.

The government should be proactive in anticipating the situation will not ease so soon. Meanwhile, this scourge of Covid-19 would not be contained if the people are not cooperative in making sacrifice and helping to tackle it.



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