

Steps Towards Easing of MCO

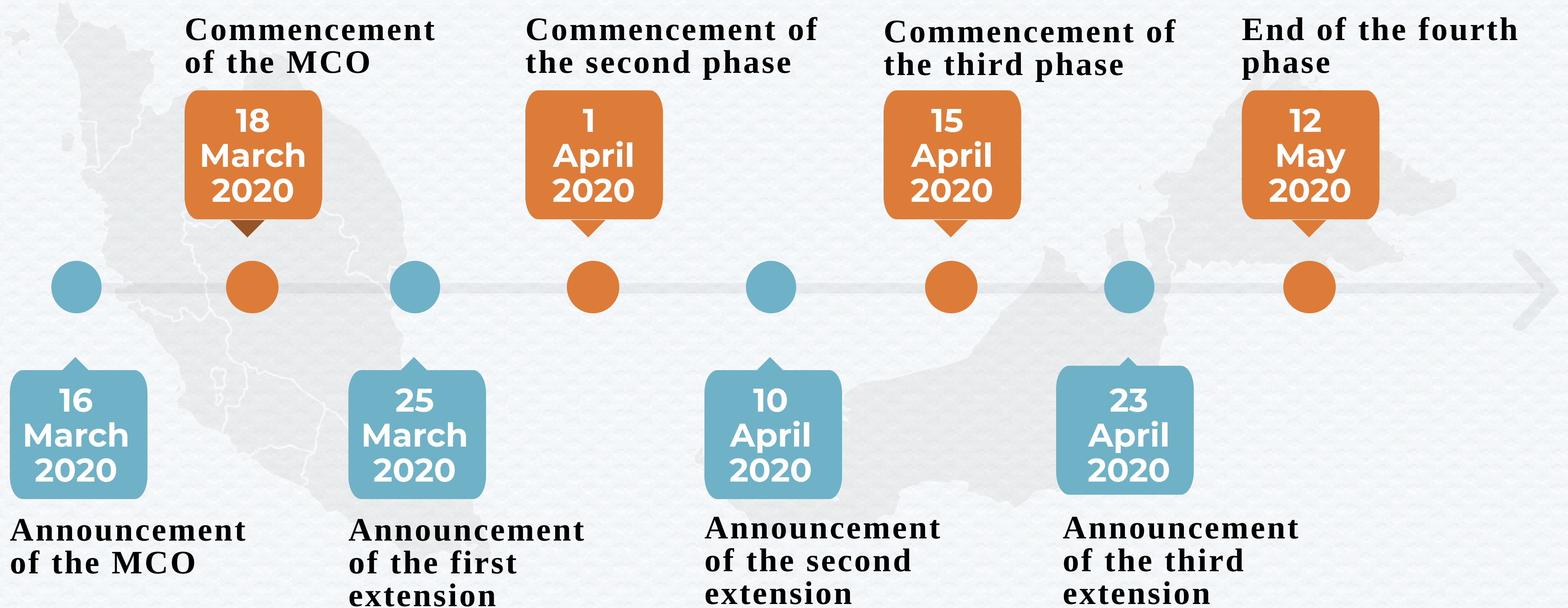


QUICKTAKE



The Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia has been in place for six weeks after three extensions by the Government. There remains no definite termination point in sight yet, despite its current period set to last until 12 May 2020. At the same time, the number of infection cases in Malaysia also seem to be declining, triggering the conversation on ending the MCO. As we ease into its fourth phase, some thought and analyses should be given to how the transition period from the MCO to the new normal would look like.

A Brief Timeline



Supplementary Rules of the MCO

- Ban on interstate travel
- One person per car
- 10 km-radius limit for travel
- 8am - 8pm operating hours for essential services
- Harsher punitive action for violators

Socio-Economic Costs of the MCO

- Increase in xenophobic attitudes
- Economic losses of RM2.4b per day
- Lack of access to online-based education system
- Financial strain from the stimulus package (RM260b)
- Stress, depression and anxiety

Six Criteria to Lift the MCO

- Border control must be maintained
- Social distancing must be retained
- Health system must be improved
- The needs of the high-risk group must be addressed
- The public must adhere to the new social norm
- Vulnerable areas and communities must be identified

Ending the MCO – What to Consider?

According to Director-General of the WHO, "Every country should be implementing a comprehensive set of measures to slow down transmission and save lives, with the aim of reaching a steady state of low-level or no transmission". Prior to this, however, there are key points that we need to consider before formulating such measures.

Leaders say...



"It is precisely because the figures give rise to hope that I feel obliged to say that this interim result is fragile. We are on thin ice, the thinnest ice even" – Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany



"We are opening up the economy, but we're not opening up people's social lives" – Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister, New Zealand

Source: *Business Insider Malaysia*, World Economic Forum

Differentiating Between

Post-MCO

- To last from two to four weeks
- Dependent on Malaysia's domestic situation
- A crucial period to avoid further lockdowns

Post-COVID-19

- To last from six to 12 months
- Dependent on global situation
- Resurgence of the pandemic could influence the situation in Malaysia

Why is there a reluctance to discuss the lifting of the MCO?

Lifting the MCO at an inappropriate time could lead to another outbreak

Deadly Resurgence

Undetermined Measures

We have yet to specifically determine control measures that must remain in place post-MCO

While the spread of COVID-19 accelerates very fast, it decelerates much more slowly

Slow Deceleration

Public Participation

The public must be given the power to manage their own measures in controlling the infection rate

If Malaysia lifts the MCO...



Which non-essential services should be opened up first and why?



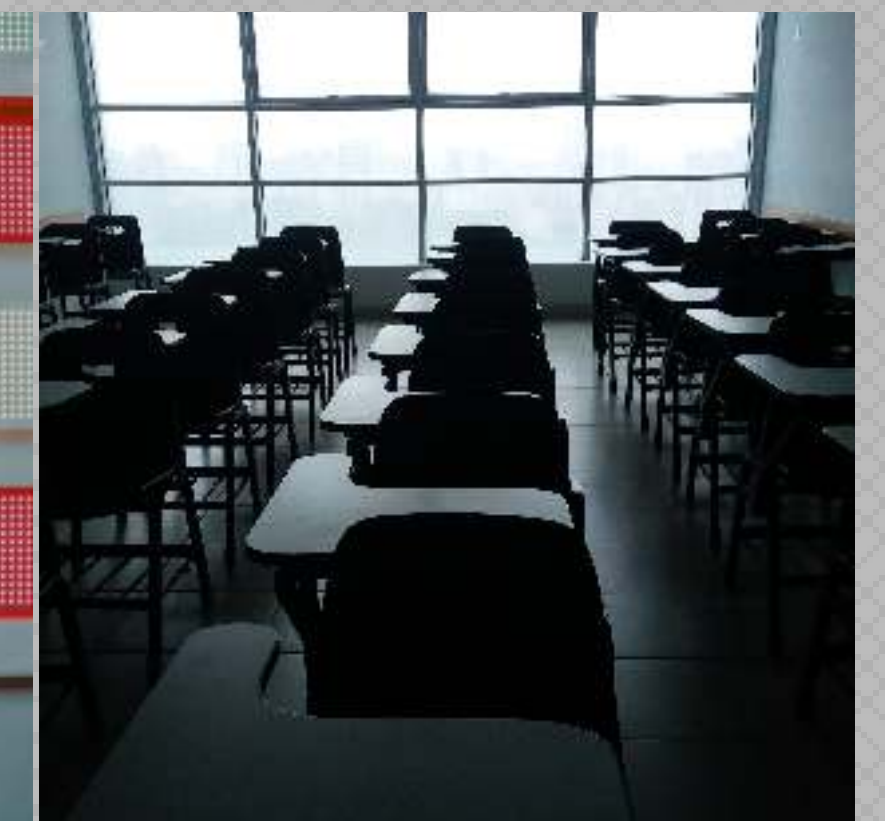
How long should we maintain practicing physical distancing?



Will Malaysia continue to ban interstate travel and close its international borders?



Will curfew remain in place?



When will schools and universities reopen?

Should Malaysia lift the MCO soon?

Based on the experience of **Singapore** and the emergence of new cases in **Selayang** and **Petaling Jaya**, there remains the need to be vigilant and continue aggressive testing, especially on communities that have been left out thus far



Looking Ahead: What Should the Transition Strategy Cover?

The post-MCO period is critical, as it is a litmus test on whether the lessons learned and culture formed during the MCO have become a habit observed by all members of the society.



Domestic Politics

- Managing the stability of Malaysia's political landscape
- Ensuring the quality and implementation of policies in the transition and post-MCO periods



Economy

- Opening economic activities in green zones to mitigate more losses in income and employment
- Financing of economic recovery given low price of commodities and constraints in government revenue
- Improving digitalisation of industries as a future source of growth



Social

- Managing public expectations and pressures, especially if control measures are prolonged
- Preventing a sudden resurgence before the vaccine is discovered
- Conferring capacity to the people to continue control measures (e.g. physical distancing)
- Ensuring equal access to e-learning platforms
- Continuing the management of social problems during the MCO, such as mental health issues and xenophobia



Security

- Ensuring the society's compliance rate in the post-MCO period
- Enhancing contact tracing measures, such as using phone applications or cooperating with digital companies
- Mobilising forces and resources efficiently in case there is a sudden resurgence of infection
- Ensuring a degree of personal privacy, especially as testing, contact tracing and quarantine measures are ramped-up



Environment

- Encouraging the society to be more environmentally-conscious
- Reducing carbon emission, such as by popularising the use of public transport
- Imposing a stricter rule to ensure environmental compliance



Foreign Relations

- Seeking solutions for issues impacting other countries, such as continued border closure, foreign workers and students, and others
- Accommodating APEC's agenda to reflect the issues raised during the pandemic

Prepared by:



Zarina Zainuddin
Analyst
Foreign Policy and Security
Studies (FPSS)



Ariane Yasmin
Analyst
Foreign Policy and Security
Studies (FPSS)



Muhammad Sinatra
Analyst
Foreign Policy and Security
Studies (FPSS)

Institute of Strategic
and International
Studies (ISIS) Malaysia