

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **IDEAS welcomes National Recovery Plan as timely but warns that plan lacks substance**

**Kuala Lumpur, 16 June 2021** - The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) welcomed the recently announced National Recovery Plan, as a more systematic and phased approach to Malaysia's pandemic management is something that IDEAS has been consistently calling for as far back as 2020. However, the think tank warned that the plan ultimately requires more substance, as currently how the government plans to achieve the four-stage plan and its targets remains unclear.

IDEAS argued that the government's three indicators used for the National Recovery Plan are insufficient, and that the government should instead take inspiration from the Pandemic Severity Index system which IDEAS had previously proposed. The number of daily cases should instead be a seven-day average of new cases, since the number of cases is only reflective of the number of tests done per day. In fact, other indicators must be taken into consideration including the positivity rate (percentage of positive tests out of total tests performed). It should be noted that Malaysia's current positivity rate measures around 7%, which is very high relative to other countries (WHO's target is less than 5%). This means that the more tests we conduct, the higher the number of positive cases. Other indicators should be the R0, and case fatality rate (death rate).

As noted by IDEAS CEO Tricia Yeoh, "Measuring the capacity of public health facilities is a good move, but the government did not disclose what "moderate" and "sufficient" mean. There needs to be greater transparency in how the indicators are measured as we move from phase to phase."

"I am more disappointed by the fact that the plan does not include any measures towards economic recovery, which should have been the greater priority. If the economy is expected to fully open up only in October, we are talking about three more months of economic distress for an already severely weakened economy. Given the seriousness of the situation, it would do the government well to clarify why they only intend to open parliament during the CMCO phase. I reiterate the call to reconvene Parliament immediately."

IDEAS called for the specific steps that the government intends to take to ensure Malaysia can have a quicker exit strategy. IDEAS called for mass, frequent and affordable testing to be rolled out nationwide, in order to gain a more accurate reflection of the actual infection rates now, rather than intentionally testing less in order to get lower daily case rates.

Finally, IDEAS noted that the pandemic is likely going to last for several years, and that the government together with the private sector and civil society must realistically consider how to manage a pandemic should new strains emerge while ensuring the economy does not literally collapse. The think tank called for data to be utilized to provide for targeted measures, and for consistency in their application all round. Since the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for

each phase will be laid out by the government soon, it is imperative that said SOPs are transparent and accurate. Without these measures, IDEAS warned that Malaysia will be stuck in lockdown mode for several years to come, which would no doubt have dire consequences on the economy as well as education.

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## **About IDEAS**

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) is a nonprofit research institute, dedicated to promoting solutions to public policy challenges, focussing on three overarching missions – advancing a competitive economy, ensuring trust in institutions and promoting an inclusive Malaysia. IDEAS is Malaysia’s first independent think tank, free of personal interests and partisan influences. For more information, visit [www.ideas.org.my](http://www.ideas.org.my).

## **For enquiries, please contact:**

Amir Ridzuan Jamaludin  
Manager, Programme Secretariat  
+603 2070 8881/8882  
[amir@ideas.org.my](mailto:amir@ideas.org.my)