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Your opinion

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Government must tackle issues boldly

THIS is a critical time for our beloved country Malaysia. Rarely have we faced three major crises at the same time. These are the political, economic and health threats to our nation's sustainability and future prospects.

The recent political turmoil and world economic and consequently our own slowdown have been aggravated by the Covid-19 outbreak that seems to be worsening.

It was sad to see that many of our political leaders had to get involved in so much unproductive politicking that has led to a change in government so soon after the general election that was held only in May 2018.

Although the public generally feel that the new government came into power through the back door, it has actually been constitutionally installed.

Despite the feelings of depression and even some sense of hopelessness at this time, the people could be prepared to listen to the new Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's appeal: "Come on, give us a chance!"

He also said: "We have promised and we will deliver."

Malaysians are generally forgiving and pragmatic so we will wait and see, and respond and react

accordingly at the next polls.

But the new government has to boldly face the critical political, economic and health challenges we are all facing as a nation. The question in most minds is whether it will meet these challenges boldly and expeditiously.

The Cabinet has already indicated the following measures which are most welcome.

1. It is laudable that the Cabinet decided at its first meeting on Wednesday to form the Economic Action Council (EAC). It is good that this council would meet every Monday so that the Cabinet can decide on its recommendations when it meets every following Wednesday. Many of its proposals for quick action are already available from our previous experiences in facing similar challenges, hence any delays in action will hopefully be monitored closely by the rakyat and criticised constructively.

2. It is good that the bottom 40% of the income groups (B40) will be given priority in the introduction of new policy counter-measures in the economic field. But please do not neglect the middle 40% (M40) of the income groups. The middle and especially lower middle income groups should not be forgotten as usual. They will watch

the government closely, too!

3. The stimulus package introduced recently should now be revised upward. The RM20bil allocated previously may not be adequate.

We have to recalibrate the budget even if the budget deficit and borrowing have to be raised further. After all, we are in crisis mode and the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and also international rating agencies will understand our predicament.

No country should be forced to save when their survival is threatened! We can allow our budget deficit to rise to about 5% of our national income from the present figure of around 3.5%.

4. The establishment of the Covid-19 Fund to help the poor who are affected by the disease is a great idea and should be strongly supported by the public. This is the time when the Shared Prosperity Vision should be supported by all Malaysians and friends. It does not matter whether it was initiated by the Pakatan Harapan government. The new government should not reject the many sound policies of the previous one merely because Pakatan is now in the opposition. The people come first and politics should come second and not the

other way around, please!

Corporates should also rally around the new government.

5. By all means, please cut the salaries of the top political leaders by about 20% to signal that they also care for the poor and are not associated too much with their money politics. After all, the ministers in particular enjoy many attractive privileges!

6. Most importantly, the new government should also show that it means business and is serious about its promise to deliver – and to deliver soon. All the previously promised reforms in security, safety, human rights, environment and a whole range of other outstanding reforms relating to improving race and religious relations and national unity have to be addressed with greater urgency.

7. If we don't seize this opportunity to undertake socioeconomic structural changes in our country, we will lose out to other rising economies. Hence, some old and outdated principles and practices of the 50-year-old New Economic Policy (NEP) have to be seriously reviewed as a matter of priority. As a result, Malaysians at the B40 and M40 levels should not feel alienated.

8. The Covid-19 challenge has to be tackled with more intensive

education and awareness programmes that will optimise the unity of purpose of the united Malaysian people to collectively cooperate more closely as they do in China and some other countries.

9. The civil service has carried out its duties with great dedication, competence and perseverance despite the huge odds of destructive politicking and the other virus attacks. The new government should show more appreciation to the whole public service that has commendably kept the government machinery going at high performance despite the lack of political leadership.

10. Finally, the new government should emphasise the promotion of national unity and religious and racial understanding in the longer term.

But for now we must seek more boldly to fight harder against the politicking, economic slowdown and the vicious Covid-19.

May God help us overcome all our challenges and come through successfully with flying colours.

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