

BATTLING THE PANDEMIC

A SALUTE TO OUR FRONTLINE HEROES

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Malaysia honours the contributions and sacrifices of all frontline personnel

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It has been almost 10 months since Covid-19 first unleashed its fury and upended the life of nearly everyone around the world, including Malaysians.

As Malaysia navigates the challenges brought about by the global pandemic, the recovery momentum achieved by the country would not have been possible without the contributions and sacrifices of our everyday heroes on the frontlines.

MEDICAL FRONTLINERS

Similar to other countries, Malaysia immediately turned to its doctors, nurses, medical staff and healthcare workers, including those working in laboratories, when the pandemic broke out.

Despite the hardship, health risks and uncertainties over the virus at the start of the pandemic early this year, medical and health frontliners continued to carry out their responsibilities to protect the people.

These heroes, who struggled with fatigue and frustration, were not spared from the virus. The Health Ministry, on Dec 18, confirmed that 1,359 medical and healthcare workers had been infected with Covid-19 since the third wave of the pandemic hit the country in September.

Their immense contributions at a time when the country was grappling with the pandemic not only earned them praise from Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin but also people from all walks of life.

TAN SRI DR NOOR HISHAM ABDULLAH

A tribute to heroes of the pandemic would be incomplete without mentioning Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, who has become the public face of the nation's battle against the virus.

The 57-year-old, a trained surgeon, has been on the frontlines since day one in managing the Covid-19 health crisis.

At a time when panic and misinformation were rife, Dr Noor Hisham provided a degree of calm, compo-



sure and professionalism during his daily press briefings, which were aired live to millions of homes across Malaysia.

His leadership earned him praise and recognition not just from Malaysians but also from abroad, with one Chinese TV station ranking him among "the world's top doctors".

Despite facing pockets of criticism, Dr Noor Hisham has persevered and is now focused on guiding the frontliners on the upcoming vaccination of millions of Malaysians.

SECURITY FRONTLINERS

The measures and standard operating procedures (SOP) rolled out by the government to prevent the virus from escalating would not be effective without the role played by the police, armed forces, People's Volunteer Corps (Rela) and other security agencies.

Like medical and healthcare workers, security frontliners worked day and night, manning roadblocks during the various phases of the Movement Control Order (MCO) and patrolled the borders to stop any encroachment by illegal immigrants, thus stemming the import of Covid-19 cases.

On many occasions, security personnel went beyond the call of duty to help the public during the challenging times brought about by the pandemic.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

From its incessant SMSes, sometimes early in the morning, to unravelling confusing standard operating procedure (SOP), the men and women of the council deserve an honourable mention for their work in undertaking the mammoth task of coordinating eve-

rything related to Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic.

The council is the leading agency that coordinates policies related to the nation's security.



Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

At the beginning of the pandemic, the council, along with the Health Ministry, was involved in a special ministerial meeting each morning chaired by the prime minister to discuss and deliberate on the Covid-19 situation in the country. These meetings subsequently formulated the SOP, aimed at creating balance not only to protect the people from the virus and but also to reduce the adverse economic

impact of the pandemic.

Decisions reached during the meetings were later relayed to the public either by a televised press conference by Senior Minister (Security Cluster) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob or via daily press statements.

EBIT LEW

From providing buses to helping university students stranded in campuses, to flying in personal protective equipment (PPE) for





Kuan Chee Heng



Ebit Lew



Veveonah Mosibin



Samuel Isaijah

healthcare workers in Sabah, deploying a water tanker during the water supply disruption in Selangor, and even donating food to Zoo Negara, freelance preacher Ebit Lew continued to make headlines this year with his generosity and philanthropy.

His speedy actions in helping the needy earned him the gratitude of countless Malaysians.

UNCLE KENTANG

Philanthropist Kuan Chee Heng, affectionately known as "Uncle Kentang", goes by the mantra that charity knows no specific time and place.

When some Malaysians were struggling to make ends meet after losing their source of income, Uncle Kentang immediately went to

their rescue.

Like Ebit Lew, Kuan earned praise from the public for his compassion and generosity, as well as his willingness to be among the first to help those in need.

SAMUEL ISAJAH

With the pandemic casting a gloom over the country, 33-year-old English teacher Samuel Isaijah was one of the few bright lights. Known to his students as Teacher Samuel, he made Malaysia proud when he was listed as one of the top 10 finalists for the 2020 Global Teacher Prize.

Samuel has been acknowledged as a "game changer" for introducing his unique teaching methods to help his Orang Asli pupils from SK Runchang

in Pekan, Pahang.

His creative approach made an impact on his Orang Asli pupils, whose interest in writing and speaking English has since grown, thus earning him a spot in the prestigious global awards.

Samuel may not have won the top prize but he remained a winner in the hearts and minds of Malaysians.

VEVEONAH MOSIBIN

Sabah student Veveonah Mosibin is a hero of a different sort.

In June, the 18-year-old posted a video on her YouTube channel, relating how she had to perch overnight on top of a tree to get Internet access in order to take her online examination at her village of Kampung Sepatalang

in Pitas, Sabah.

Her video caught the attention of the public and highlighted the lack of Internet access in Sabah's rural areas. It sparked intense discussions online when Deputy Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Zahidi Zainul Abidin claimed that she was just a YouTuber and that she was not sitting an exam.

After severe backlash by politicians and netizens, Zahidi apologised to Veveonah.

DELIVERY RIDERS AND CLEANERS

The Covid-19 pandemic, which compelled the government to introduce measures restricting the movement among the people to break the chain of transmission, has also changed the way people perceive others.

The pandemic has seen delivery riders joining the ranks of the nation's frontliners, providing an essential service by ensuring that food and other goods are delivered to their destinations safely.

Cleaning staff are also on the frontlines in the fight against the pande-

mic. While some of us adapt to the new normal, cleaners played an instrumental role in ensuring that surfaces and areas are kept clean, thus preventing them from becoming the potential hosts of the virus.

CARING MALAYSIANS

Malaysians who complied with the SOP are our national heroes. During the pandemic, those who adhered to the measures introduced by the government were hailed as heroes by Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Bador.

Those who had complied with the SOP displayed the commitment to help break the chain of Covid-19 infection.

As the country moves towards the recovery phase, Malaysians must consider themselves as frontliners by embracing the new normal and comply with the SOP to keep the virus at bay.

As Dr Noor Hisham had reiterated on many occasions, the onus is on the public to make it happen. **Additional reporting by Mohamed Basyir**

