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### UNITY IN DIFFICULTY: A USEFUL TOOL TO FACE A PANDEMIC CRISIS

Wednesday 04/08/2021

**KOTA BHARU, Aug 4 (Bernama) --** Malaysia is blessed with multi-ethnic groups with diverse religious beliefs. Although this country has faced many challenges related to this diversity since its establishment, Malaysia has managed to tackle every issue properly and has been able to survive.

However, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic has triggered undesired and unimagined impacts, causing the closure of several sectors that had previously been known as lavish and contributing to the country's GDP. On a micro level, people are struggling, with some of them experiencing a loss of income due to business closures and unemployment.

Many are struggling with daily routines, having to cope with work and house chores at the same time. Recent evidence shows that the number of mental illnesses has spiked since the MCO, while total cases of suicide have also increased. This is not something pleasant to hear, but it does show how terrible the situation has become.

Despite having no choice but to face this difficult situation, we should feel proud of what we are doing now. It is safe to say that we have been united in fighting this battle. Since the beginning of the MCO implementation, we have seen many heart-breaking stories on social media.

People have starved due to their inability to buy food; families have lost loved ones to Covid-19; and other depressing news that distresses our hearts. Many of us have shown sympathy, empathy, and concern, with some individuals or groups offering a helping hand. Sympathy, empathy, concern, and love have united us during this trying time. We are in this together.

Every day, many cases are reported on social media about the difficulties and challenges faced by individuals. After what seems like endless continuations of the MCO implementation, many workers have been laid off, while business owners have been unable to resume business operations as usual.

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This situation has affected the source of income for survival. However, despite the difficulties that plague society at this time, the spirit of unity is an element to be proud of, and this has been shown by a majority of people in Malaysia, who are sensitive to and concerned about the difficulties experienced by others.

This extended beyond domestic issues, when the Malaysian community also showed support and solidarity towards Gaza after the region had been tainted by Zionist atrocities.

Being united in adversity is a major defence in facing the challenges of the pandemic. We may have leaders who either do not listen to the grievances of the populace, or do not understand the plight of community members.

Yet, the spirit of unity manifested by the populace has given encouragement and hope to the community to remain rational, to never surrender, and to keep on being strong. The initiative of hoisting the white flag is considered a last resort of trying to seek help, especially for those who are at their wits end in terms of daily survival. This method has received encouraging responses, although some parties have disputed the legitimacy of the action.

However, this initiative still receives many positive responses from community groups, such as local celebrities, NGOs, religious committees, houses of worship, and private individuals. Many kind souls have united to channel aid through the provision of 'food baskets' to groups in need.

The public is unified in ensuring that no member of the community goes hungry, especially among married couples with children and senior citizens with health problems.

In addition, various parties have also united to mobilise the spread of awareness and knowledge about the dangers of the Covid-19 pandemic and the importance of complying with SOPs.

Along with the increasing rate of suicide and emotional pressure among members of the community, various NGOs have put in great efforts to extend assistance and counselling services to individuals who face problems. Many individuals have also stepped up to volunteer to address these issues and problems.

Even though we live in a multi-racial and multi-religious society, the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us a very valuable lesson; to unite through the practice and attitude of helping, understanding, empathy, and tolerance.

The community is unified in adhering to government orders during the MCO period to ensure that the Covid-19 chain of transmission can be curbed even if there are minor disobediences by irresponsible parties.

This plural society also shows solidarity and sympathy for the strength, perseverance, and determination demonstrated by the front-liners who are doing their best to ensure that the national defence and security system is not paralysed.

We are facing a challenging situation and we are unsure as to when it will end. However, we all need to remain united to ensure that this difficult situation can be overcome and that the situation will return to normal.

This spirit of unity not only creates a harmonious situation and a positive

environment, but it is also expected to offer a subtle rebuke to certain groups who do not understand the difficulties faced by the populace.

For those who are close to surrendering, you do not have to be ashamed to seek help because you have to do so in order to survive.

To Malaysians who are always enthusiastic about helping and caring for the plight of other individuals, please continue to do good and spread positive vibes. You are all Malaysian heroes.

Dear Malaysians, remain united, stay strong, and always stay safe. We must fight this battle until the end and we have to believe that we can succeed.

Please adhere to all the necessary steps proposed by the MOH and the MKN. Together, we are united in facing this difficulty. Given the bleak backdrop, it is crucial for individuals, communities, and corporations in Malaysia to unify in a collective effort to ease the burden of those most impacted by the pandemic.

By Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, University Malaysia Kelantan, City Campus, Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan, Naziatul Aziah Mohd Radzi

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