



Without making Covid-19 as an excuse for insularity and inward-looking policies, the government would also pursue policies that ensure favourable market conditions for Malaysian exports, he said.

“Truly, as a developing country with strong global linkages, Malaysia is a firm believer of free, fair and open trade and investment.

“As the prime minister, I wish to take this opportunity to offer my ardent assurance that Malaysia was, is, and will always be, a country that is pro-business, pro-trade and pro-investment,” he said at the virtual World Chinese Economic Summit today.

The prime minister said with the right policy tools, targeted intervention measures and novel public-private partnership ideas, Malaysia could successfully combat the pandemic and promptly weather the resulting economic crisis.

“We must, therefore, explore all possibilities in this space, so as to enable us to swiftly put in place a system that allows us to strike a delicate balance between our health priorities and our economic needs,” he said.

Muhyiddin said in the collective pursuit of this elusive balance, it is of utmost importance that governments around the world to continue to remain true to fundamental philosophies and rules that govern international trade, which in turn provides certainty and predictability for businesses.

Protectionism and unilateralism must be resisted, he said, and unimpeded flows of cross-border goods and services must be allowed, ensuring minimal disruptions to regional and global supply chains.

Recognising China as a key proponent of the multilateral trading system, the prime minister said the country has been a voice of reason and moderation throughout the Covid-19 crisis; calling for other countries to ensure that emergency measures introduced to mitigate the risks associated with the pandemic would not disproportionately affect trade and investment flows.

“Indeed, China’s vocal views that we should not use Covid-19 as an excuse for insularity and inward-looking policies had resonated strongly with Malaysia,” he said.

He also shared the government's implementation of several measures and stimulus packages to ensure the sustainability of micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia, as well as the survival of budding entrepreneurs in framing their response to the Covid-19 crisis.

This included the RM10 billion supplementary package that intensified the government's focus on mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on micro SMEs and SMEs through a multitude of customised measures and incentives, such as the enhanced wage subsidy programme; financial assistance through grants and micro-credit schemes; as well as conditional tax deductions, he said.

Additionally, the government has also allocated an additional RM1.2 billion in micro-credit financing, to be made available through a number of financial institutions under the recently announced Budget 2021.

The amount includes the RM110 million increase in the allocation for the Micro-Enterprises Facility under Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM), which seeks to encourage entrepreneurship activities among gig workers and those who are self-employed, he said.

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin noted that the Covid-19 crisis has become an unlikely ally for innovation, digitalisation and technology adoption.

He acknowledged rising demand in e-marketplaces, as well as the flurry of activities in e-banking systems, e-wallets and end-to-end logistics services.

“Indeed, these are all reflective of the sweeping changes within the very DNA of our businesses.

“Their core models and traditional formats are steadily evolving, and governments must respond to these changes adequately, appropriately and astutely,” he added.