

Declaration of unplanned holiday in Federal Territories on Dec 3 irresponsible, socially and economically disruptive — Ong Kian Ming

As someone who was born in Tung Shin Hospital in Kuala Lumpur, I congratulate the Kuala Lumpur Football Club (KLFC) for winning the Malaysia Cup trophy for the first time in 32 years. But it is politically irresponsible for the Minister of the Federal Territories, Shahidan Kassim, to declare a public holiday for Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, and Putrajaya on the 3rd of December as this sudden declaration of a public holiday is economically and socially disruptive for many.

90% of Kuala Lumpur's RM216 billion GDP output is in the service sector (1). KL is the heartbeat of the financial services sector in the country and is also the operational HQs of many accounting and tax consultants and of many multinational companies as well. This unexpected holiday will cost many companies millions in unplanned lost output. Some companies may have to pay unplanned extra overtime to ensure that some of their core services remain up and running during this public holiday. A back of the envelope calculation shows that this unplanned holiday may result in as much as RM400 million in lost output, something which the country cannot afford while we are recovering from the COVID19 pandemic (2). Face to face meetings may have to be cancelled, bookings for training sessions and conferences postponed, foot traffic at shopping malls in KL will decrease especially for those which depend on the office workers as customers, just to name a few examples. Businesses which conduct transactions with government offices in Putrajaya will also have to delay their transactions to next week which will also result in lost time and productivity which is unplanned.

This unplanned public holiday is also socially disruptive. There may be parents to live in KL and send their kids to school in KL but work in Selangor. They would have to make sudden childcare arrangements for their kids who do not have to go to school. Those who have court appointments scheduled at the KL High Court for Friday, 3rd of December 2021, will also find their appointments postpone and this will create a cascading effect leading to other court appointments being delayed and postponed as well.

One wonders if the Minister really thought about all these economic and social disruptions when he suddenly announced the public holiday yesterday on the 1st of December 2021. It wasn't as if Malaysia had won our first Olympic gold medal or achieved something historic at an international sporting event. Does this act by the Minister set an unhealthy precedent for the Chief Ministers and Menteri Besars of other states to declare an unplanned state holiday when their respective teams win the Malaysia Cup? This populist move by the Minister makes me wonder if he has no other ideas on to showcase the policy changes he wants to bring about to make KL into a World Class city under his watch as the Minister of Federal Territories.

1. 2020 GDP by state figures, according to **DOSM** (https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemByCat&cat=491&bul_id=YnhhZ2g5QlpZWG9RcVNwTGhLaHE4UT09&menu_id=TE5CRUZCblh4ZTZMODZlbmk2aWRRQT09)

2. Assuming a GDP output of RM216 billion, 243 working days in 2020, disruption of 90% of the economy which is in the service sector and a conservative estimate of 50% lost output from the service sector – calculation for the estimated RM400m in lost output.

<https://www.msn.com/en-my/news/national/declaration-of-unplanned-holiday-in-federal-territories-on-dec-3-irresponsible-socially-and-economically-disruptive-ong-kian-ming/ar-AARmIVO?ocid=BingNewsSearch>