

Comparative Study of Tax Policy Related to COVID-19 in ASEAN Countries

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Article Info Volume 83 Page Number: 6519 - 6528 Publication Issue: May - June 2020

Article History

Article Received: 29 April 2020 Revised: 05 May 2020 Accepted: 16 May 2020 Publication: 18 May 2020

Abstract:

The main problem in this research is that the Corona pandemic virus (COVID-19) has made economies in several countries slow down, especially in ASEAN countries. This is because the spread of COVID-19 is very fast and because some countries issue quarantine policies that affect economic acceleration. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of government in ASEAN countries to take action on the issue of policies in the field of taxation related to COVID-19. This research uses data collection techniques. Each ASEAN country has taken its own role as a country that is present for its people, this is evident from the results of this study showing all ASEAN countries provide incentives and relief for taxpayers affected by COVID-19. Most ASEAN countries provide the policy to the tourism sector, certain industries, employees, small and medium businesses. The researcher recommends that it is necessary to develop taxation policies in ASEAN countries in connection with the anticipation of an economic crisis that could be caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Tax Policy, COVID-19, ASEAN Countries.

I. INTRODUCTION

Countries throughout the world are fighting coronavirus or commonly referred to as COVID-19. COVID-19 has made threats not only threats to the health sector of each country but also threatens the economic sector.

At present, because China has an economy of 8 to 9 times greater than during the SARS epidemic, and is even more connected to the rest of the world, experts believe that the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy could be very large. As China now accounts for around 16.3% of world GDP, the

country has become a major growth driver worldwide, with the IMF estimating that China alone accounts for 39% of global economic growth in 2019. This implies that any slowdown in the country's economy could possibly send waves to the entire global economy.

In ASEAN itself, since the outbreak of COVID-19 the supply chain has been disrupted and is experiencing an economic slowdown. The impact is increasing because ASEAN is China's second-largest trading partner, following the US in 2018, at the height of the US-China trade war. Total trade



between China and ASEAN is valued at more than the US \$ 500 billion in 2019 and the two regions have even set ambitious targets to achieve trade worth the US \$ 1 trillion by 2020 - difficult to achieve now due to a pandemic.

To overcome the economic impact, several ASEAN members have issued various fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to help the industry. Those who are directly and short-term impacted mainly in the fields of tourism, hospitality, and aviation. Some ASEAN governments also set up incentives to deal with the long-term impact of a pandemic, giving their citizen's tax breaks or cash gifts

II. METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, so it will explain how fiscal policy is to deal with the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in each ASEAN country. Cooperation between ASEAN countries both in the economic field and the exchange of tax information does not make fiscal policy to deal with the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in each ASEAN country equally. In addition, this study will also classify the level of fiscal policy to deal with the long-term impacts of the same and different COVID-19 pandemic in ASEAN countries.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Indonesia

Indonesia has designated the COVID-19 outbreak as a national disaster that affects the economic stability and productivity of certain sectors and to maintain stability in economic growth, public purchasing power, and productivity of certain sectors in connection with the COVID-19 outbreak. Indonesia issues Regulation of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (PMK) Number 23/PMK.03/2020 dated 21 March 2020 concerning Tax Incentives for Taxpayers Affected

by the Corona Virus Outbreak. The regulation contains:

- a. Income Tax Incentives (PPh) Article 21 will be provided to employers from the 440 business field classifications listed in the appendix of PMK Number 23/PMK.03/2020, and are an Export Purpose Import Facility (KITE) company. Through this incentive, government will cover Article 21 Income Tax from employees with regular and regular gross income, which amounts to no more than Rp. 200 million in a year. To get this incentive, the employer can submit a notification for the use of Article 21 Income incentives to the Head of the Registered Tax Office (KPP). This government incentive will be given from the April 2020 Tax Period to September 2020.
- b. Income Tax Article 22 Import Incentives, collected by the Foreign Exchange Bank or the Directorate General of Customs and Excise when the Taxpayer imports goods. Taxpayers (WP) who can be exempted from this levy are businesses that are in accordance with the classification code listed in the appendix of PMK Number 23/PMK.03/2020 and have been designated as a KITE Company. Application for Certificate of Free Collection of Income Tax Article 22 must be submitted by WP in writing to the Head of the Tax Office where the Central WP is registered. The period of exemption from collecting income tax is valid from the date of the free certificate issued until 30 September 2020.
- c. Incentives for reducing Income Tax Article 25 installments of 30 percent of installments that should be owed. Reduction in the amount of installment of Article 25 Income Tax is done by giving notice of a reduction in the number of installments in writing to the Head of the Tax Office where the Taxpayer is registered. If WP meets the incentive criteria, then the reduction in the number of installments will be valid until the September 2020 Tax Period.



d. Value Added Tax (PPN) incentives for have business taxpayers who a field classification listed in the appendix of PMK Number 23/PMK.03/2020 and have been designated as a KITE company. In addition, this Taxable Entrepreneur (PKP) is a taxpayer whose VAT paid more than Rp5 billion in restitution. With this condition, WP can be given a preliminary refund of an overpayment of tax as a PK at low risk. If the PFM meets the requirements, the VAT Period Notification Letter that is given a preliminary return is valid for the Tax Period from PMK 23 to promulgation up to the September 2020 Tax Period and will be submitted no later than 31 October 2020.

2. Malaysia

In Malaysia the Malaysian government anticipates the economic impact caused by COVID-19, through the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) and Royal Malaysia Customs (RMC), the Malaysian government issued several policies in the field of taxation, including:

- a. There are no penalties for the late payment of taxes on the condition that payment is made on 30 April 2020.
- b. There is an extension of time (until 30 April 2020) to submit the CP204B Form, Submission of Notification of Changes to the Accounting Period, which will be due in the period 18 March 2020 to 29 April 2020.
- c. Extension of time until 30 April 2020 to submit documents for tax audits or investigations, if not due in the period 18 March 2020 to 29 April 2020.
- d. Submission of an income tax return due between March 2020 and June 2020 is extended by two months.
- e. Submission of appeal to the Special Commissioner, which falls between 18 March 2020 and 31 March 2020, is automatically extended until 30 April 2020.

- f. Exemption from import duties and sales tax for face masks.
- g. Submission of a refund due to customs on March 31, 2020, was extended to April 15, 2020, and penalties related to the return were sent.
- h. The response time to the income tax audit and investigative questions was extended to 30 April 2020.
- i. Country-by-country reporting (CbCr), which will mature on March 31, 2020, is extended to April 30, 2020.
- j. Extension of time until 30 April 2020 to make payments regarding tax estimates for companies and individual taxpayers who work alone, which will be due on 31 March 2020.

3. Singapore

In the midst of an economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Singapore government adopted the following taxation policies:

- a. Automatic Suspension of Corporate Income Tax (CIT) Payments
 All companies with CIT payments that are due
 - All companies with CIT payments that are due in April, May and June 2020 will be given an automatic three-month deferment of this payment. CIT payments that are deferred from April, May and June 2020 will be collected respectively in July, August and September 2020. The company can expect to receive a letter from IRAS on April 15, 2020. People at GIRO and who have CIT payments due in April, May and June 2020 can see a revision of the installment plan on the myTax Portal in early May 2020. Companies that do not use GIRO and are required to make a CIT payment once in April, May and June 2020 and to see the due date for extended payments can use the Corporate Tax Delay Calculator (28KB).
- b. Support for Entrepreneurs
 - Automatic Suspension of GIRO Reduction for Self-employed Individuals
 Payment of income tax due in May, June, and July 2020 will be automatically



suspended for three months each until August, September, and October 2020. This means that there will be no income tax payments in May, June and July 2020 No application needed.

2). Payment Extension for One Time Payment For one-time income tax payments due in May, June and July 2020, there will be a delay of 3 months each for August, September and October 2020. For example, if the due date is initially May 15, 2020, the due date renewal for payments is August 15, 2020. No application is required.

3). Property Tax

Non-residential properties will be given a property tax cut for the period January 1, 2020, to 31 December 2020. Commercial properties heavily affected by COVID-19 such as hotels, serviced apartments, tourist attractions, shops, and restaurants will receive a 100% discount. Other non-residential properties such as offices and industrial property will get a 30% discount on their property tax debt. IRAS will send a rebate notice on May 31, 2020. Property owners can expect to receive their refund on June 30, 2020.

4). Job Support Scheme (JSS)

The Job Support Scheme (JSS) was launched with the 2020 Budget to help businesses retain their local employees during this uncertain period. Eligible employers will now receive a cash grant of 25% (up from 8%) on gross monthly wages from each local employee (Singaporeans and Permanent Residents) for October to December 2019, subject to a monthly wage of \$4,600 per employee. A higher level of support above the base level of 25% will also be provided to businesses in sectors that are severely affected. Entrepreneurs who qualify for additional levels of support will be informed more closely to the date of the first payment (end of May 2020). JSS will also be extended to cover nine months of wages (up from three months), which will be paid in two additional stages in July 2020 and October 2020. Entrepreneurs don't need to apply for JSS. Grants will be calculated based on CPF contribution data. Employers can expect to receive the first JSS payment from IRAS on May 31, 2020, and subsequent payments in July and October 2020.

c. Support for Employees

Some taxpayers who have submitted income tax returns for the Year of Appraisal (YES) 2020 will receive an electronic Appraisal Notification (eg ENOA or tax bill).

1). Tax Payment Delay (GIRO)

Taxpayers can choose to postpone payment of their income tax due in May, June and July 2020 if the taxpayer needs help with his tax payment. If the taxpayer pays with the GIRO, there will be no reduction in the GIRO in May, June and July 2020. The reduction in income tax will continue in August, September or October 2020 and the expiry date of the installment plan will be extended by 3 months. The amount of income tax payable remains the same. Register for this deferral option no later than July 31, 2020. After a taxpayer request to defer payment is approved, this arrangement replaces any due date shown on the taxpayer eNOA or SMS.

- 2). Defer Tax Payment (Lump Sum Payment) If the taxpayer makes payments at once, the taxpayer may delay the payment by three months. For example, if the current payment due date is May 5, 2020, you can choose to pay at the same time on August 5, 2020.
- 3). Taxpayers who need help with tax payments If the taxpayer is facing financial difficulties and needs help with his tax payment as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, then the taxpayer can submit a request for a longer GIRO payment arrangement after receiving



eNOA. Taxpayers can access the 'Apply for Payment' electronic service on the myTax Portal to directly request longer installment payment arrangements.

4. Thailand

The Royal Thai Government has approved Phase One of various financial and fiscal assistance measures to help Thai companies, especially small and medium-sized companies, affected by the COVID-19 virus crisis. These regulations include:

a. Decrease the Withholding Tax
Withholding tax rates for service fees, such as
for hiring jobs, services, commissions, and
professional fees, will be reduced, as shown in
the table below. Those who will benefit from
this tax action include individuals, companies
and legal partnerships.

Period covered	Current Rate	Reduced Rate	Filing Method
1 April 2020 – 30 September 2020	3%	1,5%	Any filing method
1 October 2020 – 31 December 2021	3%	2%	Only e- withholding tax filing

- b. Reduction of 1.5 times the cost of interest Companies that have taken low-interest loans (soft loans) can claim a tax reduction of 1.5 times the interest costs paid from 1 April 2020 to December 2020. The company must meet the following criteria:
 - 1). Has taxable income of not more than 500 million baht from its business in the accounting period of the last 12 months, where the last day of the accounting period ends on or before 30 September 2019.
 - 2). Employees must not have more than 200 employees.

In order for the company to claim this reduction, the company must register with the Revenue Department based on the procedure established for tax amnesty.

- c. 3 times the reduction in wage costs Companies that do not lay off employees or reduce staff can claim tax reductions for 3 times the wage costs paid from April 2020 to July 2020. The company must meet the following criteria:
 - 1). Has taxable income of not more than 500 million baht from its business in the accounting period of the last 12 months, where the last day of the accounting period ends on or before 30 September 2019.
 - 2). Employees must not have more than 200 employees.
 - 3). Companies must retain employees registered with the Social Security Office, and their monthly wages may not exceed 15,000 baht.
 - 4). The current number of employees must not be lower than in December 2019.
- d. Returns the initial VAT for exporters of goods
 Goods exporters as defined in the Department
 of Regulation Tor.490 / 2562 who have a
 capital of more than 10 million baht will
 receive a refund of VAT earlier than usual, as
 follows:
 - 1). Within 15 days of electronic filing.
 - 2). Within 45 days if applying manually.
- e. Cost reduction for donations for COVID-19
 Individuals, companies and legal partnerships that make electronic donations to the Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Office of the Prime Minister, to help fight the COVID-19 virus between March 5, 2020, and March 5, 2021, can reduce costs for such donations (not exceeding 10% of net profit for a Person and does not exceed 2% of net profit for a company or legal partnership). Donation VAT is also excluded.

5. The Philippines

Previously, BIR issued a Circular Revenue Memorandum (RMC) No. 25-2020 which states that "filing the Annual Income Tax Return (AITR)



for the calendar year 2019 will not be extended. Therefore, the effect will still be done on or before April 15, 2020. "However, to limit people's exposure, BIR recommends using electronic filing facilities (eg Electronic Filing and Payment Systems (EFPS), eBIRForm Facilities, etc.).

However, improved quarantine and community locking will make it difficult for taxpayers to prepare and file income tax returns. There was a request from the public for BIR to reconsider and extend the annual filing deadline. Section 53 of the Tax Code allows the BIR commissioner, in a state of the meritorious case, to provide a reasonable extension of time to file income tax or refund the final adjustment.

COVID-19 is considered a meritorious case, based on the Ministry of Finance (DOF) announcement on March 19, and RMC BIR No. 28-2020. Specifically, DOF announced that BIR had extended filing annual income tax returns until May 15.

This was followed immediately by the release of BIR RMC No. 28-2020 on 18 March 2020, which amended RMC No. 25-2020 and provides an extension of time until May 15, 2020, where taxpayers can submit and pay their income tax returns without penalty. According to DOF, the emergency measure is intended to offer assistance to Filipino taxpayers whose tax obligations, tax filing and payment obligations will be affected by the regulation of labor frameworks and the improvement of community quarantine rules. However, in the same statement, DOF emphasized the effect of the extension on our tax collection targets so that those who can submit within April 15, 2020, deadline are still urged to do so.

In an effort to strike a balance between raising funds and accommodating concerns arising from COVID-19, BIR also ruled out a taxpayer's penalty for filing an annual income tax return in an extended period and venue requirements. RMC No. 28-2020 stipulates that taxpayers can submit and pay their taxes to the bank of the official agent

closest to their location or the revenue collection officer under the revenue district office.

6. Brunei Darussalam

There are no changes in policy regarding COVID-19, it is known related to Personal Taxation, namely:

- a. Income tax: There is no personal tax on individuals in Brunei Darussalam (residents and non-residents).
- b. Social security: There are no social security taxes in Brunei Darussalam. However, all citizens and permanent residents of Brunei Darussalam must contribute 5 percent of their salary to a State managed provident fund (Tabung Amanah Perkerja (TAP)). The employer will have to also contribute the same amount for its employees to the provident fund.

In addition to the above, all citizens and permanent residents of Brunei Darussalam must also contribute 3.5 percent of their salary to a Supplemental Contributory Pension Scheme (SCP). The employer will have to also contribute the same amount for its employees to the Scheme. However, both the employer's and employee's monthly contributions are capped up to a salary of BND 2,800 per month.

Further information: For more information regarding the personal tax regimes relevant to various countries around the world, see "KPMG's Thinking Beyond Borders".

7. Cambodia

The Ministry of Economy and Finance on February 25, 2020, issued guidelines directing the tax department to implement measures to support the garment and tourism sector - in particular, given the impact of the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19).

For the garment sector, "tax exemptions" for periods ranging from six months to one year are being provided, in part to address certain factors including lack of raw materials for production.

Regarding the tourism sector, tax breaks are provided for taxpayers who conduct hotel business



in the province of Siem Reap (Angkor Wat) in the form of exemptions from all monthly taxes for the period February to May 2020 as well as exemptions from "comprehensive tax audits" for the 2020 tax year. Taxpayers still must comply with the obligation to declare a monthly tax return and use an online value-added tax (VAT) management system and declare and pay their 2019 annual income tax.

Finally, exemption from stamp duty is made available in connection with certain transfers of immovable property that has a value of US \$ 70,000 or less.

Following the Royal Government's intention to improve the economy and support the tourism and garment sector (ie textiles, footwear, and bags), in the context of the COVID-19 virus outbreak and partial suspension of the Everything But Arms (EBA) program, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) issued Instruction No. 002 MEF and Letter No. 1313, for the General Department of Taxation (GDT) to implement certain steps as follows:

a. Garment Sector

For factories that are seriously affected by the lack of raw materials for production and / or suspension of EBA, depending on how affected each factory is, the Royal Government will allow tax exemptions for a period of six months to one year. MEF will determine the actual calculations and policies for this exception.

b. Tourism Sector

Taxpayers who do business in the hotel and guesthouse sector in Siem Reap province will receive the following tax breaks:

- 1). Exemption from payment of all types of monthly hotel and guesthouse taxes for the period from February to May 2020.
- 2). Exemption from a comprehensive tax audit for the 2020 tax year.

Taxpayers must still comply with the obligation to declare monthly tax returns and use an online VAT management system and

- declare and pay 2019 annual Income Tax (ToI).
- c. Exemption from the seal on certain transfers of immovable property

The transfer of ownership or ownership rights to immovable property (for all types of dwellings) valued at the US \$ 70,000 or less, will be exempt from a 4% stamp duty if the residence meets all the following conditions:

- 1). The transfer of ownership or ownership rights to immovable property is the US \$ 70,000 or less, in accordance with the real market value and as clearly stated in the purchase agreement dated between 25 February 2020 and 31 January 2021 and for that, the duty stamp must be stated during this period;
- Transfer of ownership rights (for all types of housing) originates from housing development companies registered with MEF or with provincial departments; and
- 3). A housing development company must have an appropriate sale and purchase agreement based on real market value. GDT will conduct inspections to prevent opportunistic companies from exploiting the situation by reducing selling prices below market value and thereby affecting tax revenue. The tax exemption for the tourism sector and the stamp duty above will be considered as a state duty and come into force from the instruction date on February 25, 2020.
- d. Country VAT fees for Basic Daily Foods On 21 February 2020, MEF issued Prakas No. 168 MEF. Prk (Prakas 168) to determine that VAT on certain basic foods for people's daily lives will be allowed as a state expense. The basic foods included in Prakas 168 are defined as follows:
 - 1). Meat from domestic animals including cattle, buffalo, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, and ducks, including whether the meat is fresh, cured or smoked;



- 2). Eggs of all types of pets, including whether they are fresh, cured, or smoked;
- 3). Fresh fish and saltwater of all types including lobsters, shrimp, shrimp, crabs and clams of all types, whether fresh, cured or smoked:
- 4). Sugar of all kinds does not include sweets;
- 5). Salt of all kinds; and
- 6). Fish sauce and soy sauce of all kinds.

VAT on the domestic supply of staple foods above will be treated as a state duty for a two-year period from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021. Food supplied by restaurants must be excluded from the above.

8. Laos

A stimulant package was adopted to minimize the economic impact caused by COVID-19. In principle, the government has adopted an economic stimulus package to minimize the impact caused by the ongoing coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19). The 13-size package, presented by the Ministry of Planning and Investment, was approved at the cabinet's two-day monthly meeting for March which ends on Friday. But the details have not been disclosed because the ministry needs to work with other relevant ministries to revise the steps in accordance with recommendations made by cabinet members.

9. Vietnam

The Prime Minister issued Instruction No. 11 / CT-TTg on March 4, 2020, to assign relevant ministries to implement action plans to support businesses that are experiencing difficulties due to the impact of COVID-19. Among them, the Ministry of Finance was asked to present the following action plans:

- a. deferral of payment of tax and land rent;
- b. provide tax and exempt fees, deductions;
- c. proposes a 30,000 billion VND support package (around 1.3 billion USD);
- d. defer periodic tax and customs inspection during 2020 to companies that do not have a sign of non-compliance;

- e. inreased deductions for personal income tax purposes;
- f. developing certain corporate income tax policies for small and medium-sized businesses;
- g. simplifying tax and customs administration procedures.

Action plans (a), (c), (e) and (g) are scheduled to be submitted to the Government during March 2020.

On a related note, in February 2020, the Ministry of Finance proposed an increase in tax cuts for personal income tax purposes. In particular, the reduction for taxpayers is proposed to increase to VND 11 million/month from the current VND 9 million/month and the reduction for dependents is proposed to increase from VND 3.6 million to VND 4.4 million/dependent/month.

It is hoped that the Government will issue special rules to implement the aid measures mentioned above in the coming months.

Postpone Tax Payments

The General Department of Taxation issued Shipping No. 897/TCT-QLN on March 3 called for provincial and city tax departments to extend deadlines for paying taxes and release fines for paying late taxes for businesses affected by COVID-19.

To take advantage of this exception, businesses must refer to Clause 3, Article 31 of Circular 156/2013/TT-TBC which lists cases where the tax deadline can be extended and the procedures and documents required.

In addition, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has issued a draft proposal to postpone payment of Value Added Tax (VAT) for five months for businesses affected by COVID-19.

This will be valued at the US \$ 974 million (VND 23 trillion) in taxes from businesses in agriculture, textiles, footwear, automotive, aviation, electronics, food processing, and the tourism sector, among many others. In addition, another income tax and value-added tax of US \$ 129 million (VND 3 trillion) was outstanding during this period.



Until this research is complete, the rules are still in the form of a draft. In addition to the above, the draft also includes the postponement of VAT and Personal Income Tax (PIT) for individuals and business households until 15 December 2020.

The government also plans to postpone land use fees until 31 October 2020. This is expected to cost US \$ 194 million (VND 4.5 trillion). The final draft is expected to be sent soon.

10. Myanmar

The deadline for paying taxes for businesses in priority industries has been extended to September 2020.

11. Comparative Study

All ASEAN tax authorities issued regulations regarding the extension of the payment due date and tax reporting, reduction in tax rates, and even Cambodia waiving VAT for certain goods. Most ASEAN countries provide a lot of relief to employee taxpayers, small and medium businesses, the tourism sector, and the industrial sector. This was done as an anticipation step for the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

IV. CONCLUSION

Corona virus pandemic or commonly called COVID-19 has caused disruption of several economic sectors and ultimately affected the global economy and spread on several aspects. On this basis, the state is present one of them as a regulator in the economic field, taking steps one of which is issuing policies in the field of taxation regarding incentives or tax breaks.

Each ASEAN country has taken its own role as a country that is present for its people, this is evident from the results of this study showing all ASEAN countries provide incentives and relief for taxpayers affected by COVID-19. Most ASEAN countries provide the policy to the tourism sector, certain industries, employees, small and medium businesses.

The results of this study make practical and theoretical contributions. In practical terms, the results of this study provide information in the description of taxation policies issued by in ASEAN countries related to overcoming economic obstacles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders in ASEAN countries in particular as well as other countries in general can study the results of this research as input into the development of the country's taxation policy in connection with the anticipation of an economic crisis that could be caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Theoretically, this research illustrates that the new theory of management has been applied public governments in most ASEAN countries. Public services in taxation have been upgraded to help taxpayers fulfill their taxation rights obligations, electronic tax services have been widely used with the aim of convenience and efficiency.

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