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## The Effects of Immigrant Workers and Covid-19 Pandemic on Kuala Lumpur as A Tourism Destination: A Legal Analysis

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### Abstract

An unfavourable truth about the immigrant population that colonised Kuala Lumpur was exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon contributes to the declining ability of the tourism industry to generate revenue. Local tourists are less likely to book accommodations in tourist destinations due to the presence of immigrant colonies that have reportedly violated the COVID-19 vaccination programme, which has a detrimental effect on the tourism industry. The paper aims to analyse the problems faced by the authorities in controlling the immigrants and managing this tourist destination, especially post-COVID-19. The qualitative data were gathered through doctrinal study and semi-structured interviews, whilst a survey was chosen as the quantitative data method. Later, qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated and analysed using specific coding and themes. The study discovered that the immigrant influx in the centre of Kuala Lumpur negatively impacted the tourism industry. Other than cleanliness, dilution of local identity and safety were two significant issues requiring reformation of the existing laws. The output of this research may assist the policy maker, administrator, tourism operator and the government in identifying the proper aftermath of COVID-19 resolution tailored to the actual problem in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Immigrant, Tourism Management, Tourism Industry, Legal Mechanism

### Introduction

In every country, tourism plays a vital role in contributing to economic development. Tourism is the second-largest contributor to Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), behind manufacturing (Motasim, 2014). Research by Kadir and Abd Karim (2012) suggested that the tourism industry is a significant contributor to the economic growth in Malaysia. Another study supports this by Tang and Tan (2015), that claimed economic growth, tourism, and

other drivers are all intertwined. However, the unprecedented spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 substantially reduced the income generated through the tourism industry. The income generated by the tourism industry in 2019 was 86.1 billion and suffered a sharp fall in 2020 to 12.7 billion (Tourism Malaysia, 2021), a reduction of more than 70%. According to the Malaysian Associations of Hotels (MAH, 2020), Malaysia's hotel, aviation, and travel sectors lost roughly 5.6 billion dollars due to travel restrictions. Tourism and hospitality are two of the most heavily impacted industries, exhibiting direct and indirect effects. COVID-19 has monetary ramifications and causes damage (Hamid et al., 2021). Although this is an expected pandemic consequence, the industry's survival needs to be carefully planned. Acknowledging that the substantial loss of profit was due to COVID-19, the existing problems within the tourism industry remain unresolved. They need to be considered in the planning for the revival of this industry.

Since there is a positive relationship between tourism and economic growth, it is highly anticipated that more effort should be directed to draw more tourists to particular destinations to ensure they stay longer, increase spending, and repeat their visits (Kadir & Abd Karim, 2012). One of the recognised factors affecting destination choice is known as perceived risks (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Sharifpour et al., 2013; Yang & Nair, 2015). The risks have been identified and categorised as man-made disasters and natural disasters (Ruan et al., 2017). Terrorist attacks, political instability, heavy traffic, garbage, oil seepage, and water pollution are examples of man-made disasters. In contrast, natural disasters include earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, tsunamis, and cyclones. Other risks that may impact the tourism industry are global warming and global health emergencies. Examples of global health emergencies are severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the Middle Eastern respiratory system (MERS) and the COVID-19 pandemic, which currently affects the world (Jamal & Budke, 2020). On December 31, 2019, the Government of China first reported to the World Health Organisation about the COVID-19 virus. Later, WHO declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020; this extraordinary emergency requires an unprecedented strategy. Thus, the world was halted where all borders were ordered to close to visitors, and a movement control order (MCO) was issued. Prompt action from the government directly impacted many sectors and the lives of its people. The COVID-19 pandemic had negative control on the tourist-based sector largely. Precisely, this pandemic hit the hotel, airline, and food industries as tourists cancelling all their booking and travelling are banned at domestic and international levels (Foo et al., 2020; Baum, 2020; Hai, 2020). According to the United Nations World Organisation (UNWTO), the world will see a shrink in the tourism sector by 20% to 30% due to policies imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Coke-Hamilton, 2020). In resolving the aftermath of COVID-19 issues relating to the tourism industry, it is also significant to resolve the existing issues within this industry by looking at the past and present unresolved issues so that the remedying process will be holistic. This paper highlights the existing challenges to preserving local attractions at a selected tourist spot in Kuala Lumpur so that this area will not be overlooked while salvaging the sinking tourism industry due to COVID-19. In order to arrive at a conclusive finding, an analysis is made of the population of immigrants in Silang Street and Masjid India Street. Silang Street and Masjid India Street are part of the heritage trail, one of the projects in Kuala Lumpur City Centre (Teng, 2013). The River of Life (ROL) project is identified in the Klang Valley National Key Economic Area (NKEA) under the Economic Transformation Programme. It aims to transform the Klang and Gombak River into an active, liveable riverfront with high economic value. Accordingly, the issue of immigrants, traffic, and cleanliness in Silang Street and Masjid India Street has become one of the challenges in

materialising the objectives of the ROL project. It may indirectly affect the effort to attract tourists to this area. In short, the main objectives of this paper are:

- To analyse the problems faced by the authorities in controlling the immigrants and managing Kuala Lumpur as tourist destination.
- To propose some mechanisms especially the laws and policies to be amended in order to overcome the challenges faced by the enforcement officers

### **Methodology**

This study used a mixed method approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Primary and secondary data were collected and analysed for the qualitative method to have a thorough grasp of the problem (Abdullah, 2018). A semi-structured interview with relevant officers from several Kuala Lumpur City Hall departments provided primary data for this study. According to Morse's criteria for primary selection (1998), individuals for semi-structured interviews selected to participate in this research are determined based on their knowledge, experience and expertise in tourism, planning law and the local authorities. According to Creswell, a heterogeneous population requires between 25 and 30 interviews, while semi-structured/in-depth interviews would require between 5 and 25. Hence, in reaching the saturation point, a sample size of 10 respondents from the officers of the Planning Department, Enforcement Department and Department of Permit and Licensing, Kuala Lumpur City Hall were selected for this research.

The internet was used to gather secondary data for this study, which included statutes, books, journal articles, and information from all relevant departments' websites. The Kuala Lumpur City Hall's Department of Permit and Licensing submitted statistics and records of business licence applicants were analysed. The Malaysian Companies Commission provided information on company registration. Data from the Malaysian Immigration Department's website was also used to explain the topic of immigrants. In addition, this study makes use of participant observation. Researchers can observe situations that people may be unable or unwilling to report. In this case, the business and daily social activities of immigrants in the Silang Street area were documented. One of the research's shortcomings was its lack of safety. It is not advisable, according to the enforcement officials, to undertake this observation alone or to conduct an interview with them as respondents. In this case, the observation was solely based on the capture of photographs.

For the quantitative method, this tradition is active in the field involving the law's impact on society (Mullane, 1998; Mechoulam, 2006). This research adopted a descriptive method. Descriptive research is a sort of quantitative study that entails meticulously describing a phenomenon (Fook & Sidhu, 2006). The researchers want to know a population's views, perceptions, and attitudes on the topic at hand. Its purpose is to determine how individuals in the population distribute themselves across the variables. This study used a combination of methodologies to gather, analyse, and integrate qualitative and quantitative data (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The researchers used the qualitative study to generate a specific set of theories and then tested these generated ideas on a more representative population (QUAL – QUAN) (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

For data collection, questionnaires have been distributed to 50 tourists in some areas of Kuala Lumpur. The sample from this population has been identified using convenience sampling. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2009), this sampling involves whoever is available in a particular setting, and the elements involved do not have a known or predetermined chance of being selected as subjects. The questionnaire consists of three parts: demographic

characteristics, perception and opinion of tourists on the immigrant influx in the heritage zone of Kuala Lumpur, and perception and opinion of tourists towards heritage conservation and value. The Likert scale is used in the second and third parts to measure the strength of an attitude or an opinion. It consists of questions which are simple, direct, and easy to understand.

The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis and thematic analysis. Both quantitative data and qualitative data were later triangulated before finalising the proposed discussion and suggestions for this study.

## Results

### Review of Previous Studies

An extensive amount of literature has been published on the relationship between tourism and economic growth (Singgalan, 2019, Shahzad et al., 2017; Tang & Abosedra, 2015; Antonakakis et al., 2015; Hamid et al., 2021). At a lower level, tourism manages to reduce income inequality Alam & Paramati (2016) and alleviate poverty (Blake et al., 2008). The high population of legal or illegal immigrants contributes to tourists' perception of the destination area. They are more prone to negative attitudes toward immigrants, such as fears about criminal activities that could jeopardise their safety and way of life (Habibi, 2018; Simpson et al., 2016). Writing about the tourism industry during the spread of COVID-19 has identified several other factors contributing to the negative attitude to travel within Malaysia, including the issue of vaccine-hesitant groups among immigrants that may affect the government effort to create herd immunity. Simpson et al (2016) also mentioned that travellers' perceptions of safety in a location, their likelihood of promoting the region to others, and their intention to return to that area are all likely to be influenced by attitudes toward illegal immigrants. Mufakkir (2014) proposed that the intention to visit the place of origin of the mentioned group (the immigrants) for tourism purposes is affected by anti-immigrant sentiment. When immigrants cannot achieve economic success through legal means, Ahmad and Khan (2016) believe they become involved in illicit activities. Increased crime rates are likely when immigrants displace local people within the job market. When many immigrants receive jobs in a specific area, thus depriving the jobs of local people, they may commit deviant acts to ensure their status quo. Thus, the rising number of immigrant workers brings more harm and negatively impacts society in long-term (Othman, 2015). On the other hand, Balli et al (2016) took an alternative approach to the immigrant-tourism relationship, concluding that tourists would visit immigrants' home countries if they had higher standards of institutional excellence, civil liberty, and freedom. Once again, the issue revolves around the subject of security.

Immigrants who captured the tourist spot and remained loyal to their heritage culture while becoming integrated into their new society, according to Berry and Hau (2016), reach a higher level of wellbeing. They have inferior outcomes when detached from both cultures and lack bonding and bridging capital. This will determine how long the immigrants would stay in one place. If the immigrants feel comfortable living and surviving in one area, they will be unlikely to leave that place. Therefore, the government must emphasise these matters to regulate the immigrants' activities, especially in Kuala Lumpur. Tourism can be utilised as a political tool in various ways, according to Mufakkir (2014), including policymaking and planning, sustainable development, travel limitations, empowerment and development, destination marketing and public relations, and political and ideological objectives. As suggested by Simpson et al (2016); Milan et al (2016), security is the main issue tourists will consider before

embarking on a vacation at any place full of immigrants. Hence, to maintain the flow of tourists, the government should formulate and reinforce security measures that will give confidence to the tourists.

Undeniably, the main factor leading to immigrants' migration is seeking better employment. The immigrants wish to improve their standard of living, while the employers are looking for a skilled or cheaper workforce. Thus, prohibiting the entry and involvement of immigrants in a country's economic sector may not be a wise decision. Many industries would be understaffed if foreign workers were not available for employment, as observed by (Nathanson et al., 2017). However, issues related to immigrants are not novel (Hovarth et al., 2007). According to Corrie (2008), immigrants are assets to the communities in which they dwell. He believes that immigrants contribute to the numerous ways they provide society prosperity—for example, their purchase of products and services in their local areas. Immigrants' purchasing power can be a crucial driver for economic progress in small and large communities. This is in addition to the fact that immigrants provide a valuable source of labour to the local workforce. This is the positive impact of having immigrants as players in the economic sector.

Despite literature on the connection between tourism and economic development and the connection between perceived risks that affected travellers' interest in visiting has emerged. There is currently no published research on regulating immigrants in tourism destinations, the relationship between immigrants in Silang Street and Masjid India Street, and its impact on tourists' propensity to visit Kuala Lumpur. As a result, the study fills a vacuum in the literature by examining how legal mechanisms might be used to regulate immigrants' actions in Kuala Lumpur as a heritage-tourism destination.

### **Dilution of Local Culture and Environment**

Malaysia is rich in the inheritance of local culture and identity. Starting from the era of the Malacca Empire, the history of colonisation and the British importation of immigrant policy contributes to the richness of multi-culture and identity of Malaysia's landmark and society. These local cultures are the one that attracts local and international tourist. To allow diversifying and diluting the existing culture may reduce the existing attraction. This can be witnessed by what is currently happening in the Kuala Lumpur tourist site. Silang Street is a meeting place for the immigrants, most of whom are from Bangladesh, while the others are from Nepal and Myanmar. The immigrants bring along their practices and customs in their daily activities. Therefore, the types of businesses on Silang Street must meet the demand of the immigrants. Immigrants dominate this area with restaurants, sundry shops, and saloons. Masjid India Street, another tourist icon in Kuala Lumpur, had its name after a mosque built in 1870 for the Indian Muslim population. Immigrants who conquered Masjid India Street had caused various problems such as cleanliness, health, and social issues. At a certain point, the signage and advertisement boards were all in foreign languages. The area had indeed been transformed to resemble a foreign land, not Malaysia. These immigrants consider Silang Street their hometown, and the locals feel intimidated walking around the area. Another issue related to COVID-19 and its impact on the tourism industry is the huge increase in workers getting dismissed or having their employment terminated (Mihajlovic, 2020). As Malaysia has a significant number of immigrant workers, the dismissed worker is left without options of surviving and living in Malaysia without income. This contributes to an increase in the crime rate to which the tourist felt insecure and developed a negative attitude travelling to Kuala Lumpur.

### **Regulating the Act of Spitting**

The transformation of local to foreign culture and environment has also led to the issue of cleanliness in Silang Street. The immigrants' random spitting of betel leaf juices down the corridor of the businesses selling betel leaf, which is their traditional business, has left unattractive stains. According to the interview with the enforcement officer, the prohibition against spitting and littering is the most important feature they must implement to maintain cleanliness. According to observations made during an interview with officers from the Kuala Lumpur City Hall Enforcement Department, the aspect of cleanliness is now under control after the prohibition against spitting Laws 2017 (Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur) was passed on March 15, 2017. The specific law allows local authorities to penalise anyone who spits in the area. According to statistics acquired from the Enforcement Department at Kuala Lumpur City Hall, enforcement officials are actively engaged in ensuring that the neighbourhood is clean. The issue of immigrants dominating Silang Street is not only about the issue of permits and licences to operate businesses and the cleanliness of Kuala Lumpur, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Kuala Lumpur City Hall. The issue should be seen from a broader perspective and involve many other stakeholders.

### **Legal Issues on Business Activities Related to Immigrant**

The great demand for foreign labour necessitates the authorisation from the Immigration Department to allow immigrants to enter Malaysia. However, according to the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP), unveiled by the Prime Minister, the percentage of foreign workers in the nation's total workforce will eventually be capped at 15%. Enforcement actions against foreign workers will also be strengthened to accomplish this goal (Supriya, 2021). The Prime Minister urged businesses to increase automation and mechanisation in their manufacturing processes to reduce their reliance on foreign labour.

Currently, the issue of immigrants who operate businesses falls under the jurisdiction of the Companies Commission of Malaysia. In achieving a high-income nation status in 2024-2028, Malaysia depends upon labourers in various sectors (Othman, 2015). According to the most recent estimates, Malaysia's GNI per capita is US\$11,200, just US\$1,335 short of the current threshold level that designates a high-income economy. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed progress toward the threshold. However, the country now has the opportunity to implement ambitious reforms to assure future prosperity and that the fruits of growth benefit all sectors of the population (The World Bank, 2021). Concerning this, immigrant workers would be able to help solve local people's lack of human resources. Some companies prefer immigrant workers over native labour since their wages are lower. The problem becomes more serious when local workers want a raise in pay due to rising living costs. Employers have the right to choose the cheapest human resources. The hiring of foreign workers is governed by federal government policy. As a result, international employees will only be permitted to enter Malaysia through recognised entry ports with a visa with a reference granted by the Immigration Department and an entry visa issued by the Malaysian Attachés Office in their home country. Employers must then ensure that foreign workers are cleared at entry point within 24 hours of arrival. Only foreign workers who pass the FOMEMA medical examination within thirty days and are declared fit by a clinic/medical centre registered with FOMEMA will be issued the Visit Pass (Temporary Employment) V.P. (T.E.). The foreign worker will not be allowed to stay and work in this country if they fail the medical test. The Immigration Office is responsible for issuing the V.P. (T.E.). Living and staying in Malaysia without a valid pass or permit is illegal, according to section 6(3) of the Immigration

Act 1959/63 (Act 155). Therefore, about the immigrants in Silang Street, once they have obtained a valid pass or permit, there is no reason for them to fear detention and be free to work in this area. Some of the immigrants may hold only workers pass, but in fact, they also own businesses in these areas.

According to an interview with a Kuala Lumpur City Hall's Department of Permit and Licensing member, most of the premises and enterprises are owned by Malaysians who rent them out to immigrants. In certain situations, the foreigners claim that Malaysian shop owners employ them. Therefore, the enforcement officer has no case against the immigrants as they can provide valid permits and licences, and the businesses operated are in line with the law.

Any form of trade, commerce, craftsmanship, calling, profession, or other activity carried on for profit is considered a business. However, it excludes any office or employment, charitable undertaking, or occupation listed in the Schedule of the Registration of Businesses Act 1956 (ROBA 1956) & ROBA Rules 1957. A business operating in West Malaysia, which encompasses Peninsular Malaysia and the Federal Territory, may be registered under the ROBA 1956. The two types of businesses are sole proprietorship and partnership. A personal or trade name might be used to register a business. The applicant must fill out the Business Registration Form (Form A) with a list of information, including the business name, start date, principal place of business, address of branch (if any), information about the owner and partners, type of business conducted, and a copy of the Partnership Agreement (if any). Every business owner and partner must sign the completed form and be at the counter for registration. Other essential requirements to be fulfilled are

1. The owner must be a Malaysian Citizen or Permanent Resident of Malaysia
2. The owner must be 18 years old and above
3. Only the owner/partner is allowed to make an application

The applicant should also be informed that, while firms are registered with the Malaysian Companies Commission (SSM), business owners must get licences, permits, or approval letters from other appropriate authorities to conduct their operations. According to the data below, the number of Malaysians applying for the licence is increasing yearly. In contrast, the number of non-citizens applying for the licence remains under control. However, in reality, the situation in Silang Street is vice versa.

The local government cannot tackle the issue of the immigrants' monopoly of economic activity in Silang Street alone through enforcement. Until and unless there is a business registration and permit violation, the local authority has little power to intervene. In this example, Malaysians contribute to the thriving immigrant enterprises in Silang Street because they are prepared to engage in business transactions, such as renting or selling businesses. Their company arrangement is private and within the owner's legal rights. These owners are more concerned with the profit they can make from dealing with immigrants than with the old heritage buildings, which may have historical importance.

The local authority may, other than controlling the cleanliness aspect, enforce advertisement boards. Criticisms were made against Kuala Lumpur City Hall due to their failure to monitor and enforce the law on the immigrants. Besides spitting, the enforcement aspect includes anti-littering and regulation of advertisement boards and banners. In controlling the use of language on the advertisement boards, the applicant for the licence for the premise and the advertisement board must obtain approval from the Institute of Language and Literature Malaysia to check and approve the language used. The enforcement aspect is far-reaching. In Kuala Lumpur, the number of enforcement officers assigned to monitor all locations is



insufficient. They must also consider their safety, particularly in areas where immigrants predominate, such as Silang Street, Masjid India Street, and Petaling Street.

### **Tourist Perceptions on Immigrant Influx**

Tourist perception is essential for this study as the problem's core lies in their preferences. The more they felt attracted and secure, the more they were willing to invest in travelling to Malaysia. In order to investigate the perception and opinion of tourists towards Kuala Lumpur, questionnaires have been distributed to fifty respondents who are tourists in some areas of the city centre. They include people from Asia, Europe, America, Africa, and Oceania. The demographic characteristics of these fifty respondents have been analysed based on their age, gender, occupation, highest education, and nationality.

The perception and opinion of the respondents on immigrant influx are analysed using the Likert Scale. The scales are between Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree.

The statements from this part are

Influx1- The immigrant influx affects the cleanliness of Kuala Lumpur.

Influx2- The immigrants have interfered with the business of local people.

Influx3- Immigrant activities have changed the social characteristics of the city.

Influx4- Health issue is a problem since some immigrants bring diseases with them.

Influx5- Tourists feel insecure when they visit places crowded with immigrants.

Table 2

*Mean on Perception and Opinion on Immigrant Influx*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Influx1	50	4	1	5	3.50	.138	.974
Influx2	50	4	1	5	3.48	.129	.909
Influx3	50	4	1	5	3.80	.140	.990
Influx4	50	4	1	5	3.44	.146	1.033
Influx5	50	4	1	5	3.36	.124	.875

Valid N(=50)

(listwise)

The mean for Influx1, Influx2, Influx3, Influx4 and Influx5 are 3.44 to 3.80, which means the response is between Neutral and Agree. It shows that the respondents agree with the statements in this part. For perception and opinion of tourists towards heritage conservation and value, the Likert Scale also has been used in this part. The scales are between Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree.

The statements in this part are:

Heritage1: Buildings in Kuala Lumpur fulfil the criteria of heritage buildings.

Heritage2: The uniqueness of the heritage buildings is one of the reasons why tourists visit Malaysia.

Heritage3: The government well preserves the heritage buildings in Kuala Lumpur.

Heritage4: The immigrant influx affected the heritage value.

Heritage5: New development in Kuala Lumpur affects the heritage conservation and value of the buildings

Table 3

*Mean on Perception and Opinion of the Tourists towards Heritage Conservation and Value*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Heritage1	50	4	1	5	3.58	.111	.785	.616
Heritage2	50	3	1	4	3.26	.156	1.103	1.217
Heritage3	50	2	2	4	3.64	.074	.525	.276
Heritage4	50	4	1	5	3.22	.132	.932	.869
Heritage5	50	3	2	5	3.70	.087	.614	.378
Valid (listwise)	N50							

The mean for Heritage1, Heritage2, Heritage3, Heritage4 and Heritage5 are between 3.22 to 3.70, which mean the response is between Neutral and Agree. Generally, the respondents agree with the statements in this part.

### **Heritage Conservation and Value**

In planning law, there are three competing ideologies: First, the law exists and should be used to protect private property (this is known as the traditional common law approach to the role of law); second, the law exists and should be used to advance the public interest, even if it means going against the interests of private property. Finally, the law exists and should be used to advance the public interest, even if it means going against the interests of private property (this may be called the orthodox public administration and planning approach to the role of law). Thus, against the orthodox public administration approach to the public interest and the common law approach to the overwhelming value of a private property, the law exists and should be used to further the cause of public involvement (McAuslan, 1980). Over generations, the planning theory has been significantly developed (Faludi, 1973; Hendler, 1995). The most enduring question in planning theory revolves around the definition of the public interest. McAuslan (1980) believes the law must be used to protect public interests, if necessary, against private property interests. Therefore, the local planning authority may interfere with determining whether a property owner may develop and obtain a permit to conduct any business on their property. In line with this, the local planning authority has the authority to control and regulate all development activities conducted in the Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

Kuala Lumpur's ancient structures must be safeguarded and preserved since they are of national significance. Kuala Lumpur City Hall has established Heritage Zones to ensure that buildings within these zones keep their historical character or atmosphere, as specified in the Kuala Lumpur Urban Design Guidelines (UDG). Even though buildings located in Silang Street are considered old, they are not zoned as a heritage zone. However, Silang Street is not covered or hidden from the sight of tourists. Tourists will travel by this street, even if it is not on the heritage route, and they will pass negative judgement based on their observations. The local government is aware of the repercussions. However, there is little they can do to prevent the growth of buildings along Silang Street because the conditions imposed are minor compared to those in the heritage zone.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed an inconvenient truth about the population of immigrants in this area. As a tourist destination, the heart of Kuala Lumpur, which is rich with

heritage significance, Kuala Lumpur should be shaped by its own culture and identity. Unfortunately, Silang Street and Masjid India Street are full of immigrants settling in comfortably with good houses and jobs. According to a study by the International Labour Organization (2020), on April 10, a cluster of 79 illnesses were discovered in three buildings in central Kuala Lumpur housing migrant workers: Selangor Mansion, Malayan Mansion, and Menara City One. An enhanced movement control order (EMCO), or complete lockdown, was imposed on these buildings. Selangor Mansion and Malayan Mansion have about six thousand residents, ninety-seven per cent of whom are foreign nationals, mainly from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh (Bavani, 2020). Following this report, the impression towards residents living in Selangor Mansion and Malayan Mansion will never be the same. Even though locals have been occupying these buildings for so many years, the legal and illegal immigrants have conquered the whole area. Selangor Mansion and Malayan Mansion have their history to be told since it was built back in the 1960s (Wern, 2020). Again, on May 1 2020, a large-scale of arrest was conducted in these three buildings. This sparks great concerns expressed by the United Nations (U.N.) in Malaysia, the Malaysian Bar, and a coalition of sixty-two civil society organisations (CSOs) on this action (International Labour Organisation, 2020). COVID-19 Pandemic affected the tourism industry globally. Nevertheless, the stakeholders have a significant issue to solve once the pandemic ends. Firstly, to ensure that Kuala Lumpur retains its magnificent tangible and intangible heritage. Secondly, to reduce the immigrant activities in the city centre and control the entry of illegal immigrants into Malaysia.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, most tourists visiting Kuala Lumpur believe that the immigrant influx affects the cleanliness, interferes with local people's business, changes the city's social characteristics, and increases health problems. The tourists also feel insecure when visiting places crowded with immigrants, especially during the outbreak of COVID-19. The issue of immigrants dominating business activities in Kuala Lumpur has changed the area's character and ambience, diluting Malaysia's unique local features. These changes may affect the perception of tourists, thus impacting the tourists' inclination to visit Kuala Lumpur. COVID-19 has a vast and immediate influence on worldwide tourism. The first tourism enterprises to close were due to the virus's containment measures. Tourism activities take longer time to resume and may not resume until after other companies and services have resumed. Thus, in planning for reformation and urgent revival plan for the tourism industry post-COVID-19, the government may take strict measures by drafting a policy and regulation stating that the City Centre should be free of immigrant-owned businesses.

The element of culture in sustainable development, should be considered by the local planning authority while creating the development plan for Kuala Lumpur. A document of guidelines for the municipal cultural policy was created in 2002 during the first World Public Meeting on Culture in Porto Alegre. Agenda 21 for Culture was the first document to call for cities and local governments to mobilise and link cultural development to long-term development. Many towns and local governments worldwide have embraced it, and the Fourth Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion, which took place in Barcelona on May 8, 2004, as part of the first Universal Forum of Cultures, endorsed it. On June 9, 2005, a United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Working Group on Culture was established in Beijing. It was the meeting point for cities, local governments and networks that place culture at the heart of their development processes. Even though the buildings have not been damaged by construction, the culture of Silang Street has evolved due to the high presence of immigrants.

Finally, foreign worker admission should be restricted. When the number of immigrants in Kuala Lumpur City Centre, especially in the tourist spot, declines, it is easier for the local authority to regulate the area. However, it cannot be denied that economic incentives play a role in Malaysians renting out their stores, selling their enterprises to foreigners, and recruiting immigrant staff. The rising expense of living in Malaysia, particularly in the city centre, has prompted Malaysians to make decisions that have influenced the migration of immigrants to Kuala Lumpur. As a result, top management, namely the Federal government, should emphasise and address the answers to this problem, which will decide the country's economic development.

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