

## MEF: Thanks for PEMULIH but nothing beats going back to business

PETALING JAYA: Whilst the newly unveiled RM150 billion Economic Recovery and People's Protection Package (PEMULIH) would provide support to those in need, for employers, the best way forward would be to allow businesses to reopen.

MEF President Dato' Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. said the PEMULIH package that targeted the *rakyat*, businesses and the vaccination programme would provide temporary relieve to the targeted groups.

“Some employers would benefit from the extended and simplified wage subsidy programme, the loan assistance to SMEs and micro enterprises, the two-month exemption from paying levy to HRD Corp for companies not allowed to operate during the MCO, and the automatic approval for loan moratorium – which hopefully is also interest-free,” he said.

“We are also pleased that under the *Malaysianisation* programme, the wage level had been reduced from RM1,500 to RM1,200 and this would certainly encourage employers to replace foreign workers with local workers.

“We are also encouraged by the news that 243,000 new jobs were created in the first six months of 2021 and the government was on track to create a total of 500,000 new jobs in this year.

“However, while we appreciate all of the government’s interventions in PEMULIH, we are of the view that the most effective way to address the issue of sustainability of business is to open up quickly.

“As employers, we need to be self-reliant and not to depend on one-off handouts and many employers would not qualify for the handouts too.”

He said instead of relying on the government to dispense limited funds, businesses should be allowed to operate in a controlled environment to save businesses, jobs and the economy.

“Businesses should be allowed to operate so that we can raise the cash to pay our own workers.

“The continuous lockdown will only destroy businesses to beyond salvage. There is a need to adopt a holistic targeted public-private sector approach to manage this effectively.”

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain recommended that a targeted holistic approach be adopted in areas which record low number of Covid-19 infection and to allow business to operate in most sectors with strict SOPs.

“For example, for businesses in Selangor that are not part of any clusters should be allowed to operate, and this should be the same in states that have low infection rate and low usage of ICU beds, such as Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah.

“There is no reason for safe states to still wait for national threshold numbers to improve to reopen for business.”

He said MEF also welcomed the government’s decision to allow employers that had vaccinated all their employees to fully operate in the near future.

“In this connection the scheme to allow HRDF contributors to use their HRDF contribution to pay for their employees vaccination is timely,” he said.

“However, the limitation of funding up to 10% of the HRDF contributors’ balance may be too little especially for the SMEs.”

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