

‘Employers and the *rakyat* can help accelerate NRP by maintaining strict workplace biosafety’

PETALING JAYA: Employers and the *rakyat* have a critical role in accelerating the National Recovery Plan (NRP) towards ‘new normal’ conditions by putting in place and strictly adhering to biosafety measures at the workplace.

“It’s high time that employers demonstrate serious responsibility and reassure the *rakyat* and the government by providing a safe, healthy and hygienic working environment,” said MEF President Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. in response to the recent statement of the Deputy Prime Minister YAB Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob that the nation was expected to enter Phase 2 of the NRP in August.

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain also said that the NRP could be accelerated further to Phase 3 and 4 if employers and the *rakyat* pay more attention to biosafety and implement the necessary safeguards and comply strictly with established standards on health, safety, hygiene and in particular, air quality.

“The guidance on Internal Air Quality (IAQ) was recently developed by the Department of Safety and Health (DOSH) to promote improved ventilation and indoor air quality at workplaces, homes and public places during the pandemic.

“Among the IAQ suggested measures include increasing ventilation rates, reduced population in buildings, opening windows or doors, using portable air purifiers, and elevating fresh air from outside the building.

“We’ve advised MEF members to implement the IAQ by taking the necessary steps and allocating resources for manpower and equipment as this will help reduce the risk of airborne infections.

“For this to happen, responsible employers should organise their OSH and medical teams more prominently to ensure proper communication and implementation of biosafety measures.

“In addition to maintaining good circulating air quality, the best quick and inexpensive long-term solution to stop transmission would be to keep physical distance between employees, donning proper masks and maintaining a high level of hygiene and healthy lifestyles.

“In this way, the Covid-19 infection clusters emerging from workplaces and factories could be better managed and controlled.

“We must also debunk the myth that factories are centres for clusters because since June 1, about 70 per cent of the infections were sporadic because the Covid-19 Delta variant is airborne.

“At the same time, the authorities must step up efforts to ensure success of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme (NIP) and targeted screening of symptomatic and potentially asymptomatic individuals.

“If employers, employees and the government are able to work in sync to manage both lives and livelihoods, we are optimistic that Malaysia will come out of the pandemic situation as winners.”

Concerned by the deepening financial distress of businesses and the *rakyat*, Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain also urged the government to open up more industrial sectors in the EMCO areas and lift business travel restrictions to ensure that Malaysia’s economy survives the lockdowns.

“The government has done everything it could since March last year and we are thankful for all that has been done,” he said.

“But the delicate balance between saving lives and livelihoods needs to be addressed because the perpetual MCO is driving the economy to the bottom and this is affecting many more lives than Covid-19.

“We cannot continue to live in fear of Covid-19 and remain in prolong lockdown conditions indefinitely because businesses and the *rakyat* are suffering up to breaking point.

“The lockdowns have also had a horrifying impact on the mental health of many Malaysians with cases of suicide, crime, domestic violence, depression and homelessness rising rapidly.

“On top of this, the disruptions caused to business supply chains due to the prolonged lockdowns are pushing long established investors to exit Malaysia, while potential investors are now wary of investing.

“This distressing situation needs to change and turned around fast.”

He also said the government should allow economic activities to resume notwithstanding the increasing number of daily recorded Covid-19 infections.

“The government should not use the number of daily recorded infections to determine lockdown, but should instead look elsewhere for a more relevant and accurate measure of the Covid-19 situation,” he said.

“Many countries impacted by the airborne Delta variant have accepted Covid-19 as endemic and if all stakeholders realised this and work together it would be for the greater good and wellbeing of all Malaysians.”

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