MEF says bosses breaching Covid-19 rules should be punished for damaging image of other employers

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KUALA LUMPUR (July 6): Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has called for errant employers found flouting the Covid-19 regulations and standard operating procedures (SOPs) aimed at controlling the pandemic to be hauled up and punished for damaging the image of other employers.

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. said in a statement today that some of the errant employers continue to flaunt the laws and regulations without having any regard to the health and safety of their employees or the public.

According to him, MEF has received many comments from enforcement units and the public that employers are stubborn and do not follow the SOPs.

"These small groups of (errant) employers are giving employers in general a very bad image, and they

deserve to be punished. We must take serious action as the image of employers needs to be protected," he said.

According to him, these employers range from small and medium enterprises to large local corporations that do not belong to any association.

He said the government would also want to revisit some of the penalties imposed on such employers for breach of compliance with SOPs as further deterrent.

Currently, under the Emergency (Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021, companies or corporations that violate the SOPs can be fined up to RM50,000.

"We urge the government to look into this as the penalties that are being imposed seem to not produce the desired results and ineffective to deter these employers.

"The penalties imposed must be able to effectively deter the recalcitrant employers, especially the repeat offenders, and not merely just a slap on the wrist," he said.

He also advised MEF members to strictly abide by all the laws and support all the SOPs to contain the spread of Covid-19.

"We believe all trade associations also support the government to ensure the SOPs are followed and to educate their members, and for these reasons we believe a large part of these errant employers are not members of any association," he added.

He added that there is a need to put an end to the illegal business operators utilising undocumented foreign workers to run their operations as this has become a big problem for Malaysia internationally.

"We believe our enforcement units are doing a good job but they are overwhelmed and require more manpower to cover a wide area.

"The government must be able to show that serious efforts are being made to eradicate forced labour by setting up a special unit to track and find these employers," he said.

He said that the federation supports all government efforts especially those in the enforcement team including the Ministry of Human Resources and the Royal Malaysia Police.

"We need to be firm with those with a flagrant attitude towards the pandemic.

"Only by doing so can we bring down the number of daily infections and punish those who break the law," he said.

As for the majority of the employers that have complied with the SOPs in the affected areas, he said they should be allowed to operate their businesses.

"The government could also look at incentivising employers who maintain a clean record on SOPs to fight this pandemic such as additional tax breaks for good governance," he said.

Yesterday, the Ministry of Health identified 13 new clusters. Eleven of them were workplace clusters with the remaining ones from communities.

The 11 workplace clusters were:
• Industri Tech Valley Sendayan in Negeri Sembilan (17 cases detected)
• Industri TTJ 2 in Negeri Sembilan (31)
• Jalan Harmoni Sembilan in Johor (11)
• Jalan Sri Sulong in Johor (13)
• Lorong Berjaya in Sabah (eight)
• Jalan Kayu Madang in Sabah (18)
• Industri Bentong Sebelas 2 in Pahang (nine)
• Industri Jerantut Feri in Pahang (six)
• Industri 121 Kuala Baram in Sarawak (132)
• Dah Satu Industri Kulim in Kedah (52)
• Lintang Macallum Dua in Pulau Pinang (64)