

MEF calls for immediate government action over forced labour allegations

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KUALA LUMPUR (Jan 31): Expressing serious concerns that certain Malaysian exporters have been denied access to foreign markets over allegations of forced labour practices, the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has called for immediate intervention by the government.

"Reports that local companies were subject to export ban imposed by the United States Customs and Border Protection and the Canadian authorities have widespread implications," MEF president, Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said in a

statement.

He said MEF is working closely with the government, UN agencies, and international organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) to create awareness among its members of forced labour practices to ensure that such practices are eradicated.

"Employers who utilise foreign workers must be made aware of the legal requirements such as limitations on overtime work, compliance with the Employees' Minimum Standards of Housing, Accommodations and Amenities Act 1990, and the National Minimum Wages," he said.

The MEF president also reminded employers that withholding the passports of the foreign workers is regarded as an indication of forced labour.

"MEF looks forward to working closely with the Ministry of Human Resources and the UN agencies, particularly the ILO, towards this objective as the issue of foreign worker supply and access to foreign markets are critical for Malaysia's economy during this recovery period," he said.

Syed Hussain thanked Putrajaya for the efforts taken to eradicate forced labour practices in the country.

"We hope the government can help resolve the matter as soon as possible, and we thank Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri M Saravanan for efforts to help lift the [export] ban in previous cases," he added.