

# Firms urged to switch to work-from-home system as infections surge

By **Ainaa Aiman** - October 8, 2020 8:00 AM



*Getting staff to work from home will help reduce the number of people in the cities and thereby reduce risks of the spread of the virus, says the MMA president Dr Subramaniam Muniandy.*

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has urged employers to get their staff to start working from home following the recent surge in Covid-19 cases.

"Businesses have an important role in the fight against Covid-19," said MMA president Dr Subramaniam Muniandy. "Getting staff to work from home will help reduce the number of people in the cities" and thereby reduce risks of the spread of the virus.

"The government should support such work-from-home policies, which can be seen as a corporate social responsibility initiative."

He told FMT work-from-home policies could "significantly reduce" the risk of Covid-19 spreading and would help prevent interruptions in economic activities by lockdown measures, such as the movement control order (MCO) in March and April.

During the MCO period, businesses requiring physical interactions, such as those in the service sector, were severely affected, with many reporting massive losses.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said workers should be encouraged to work from home by rotation if their work could be done remotely and if social distancing was not feasible at their places of work.



*Dr Subramaniam Muniandy.*

"Work-from-home policies depend on the requirements of companies and their needs," he told FMT.

He said it would be better for companies to take precautionary measures than to deal with the high costs of managing a workplace affected by Covid-19.



*Shamsuddin Bardan.*

However, he also said many bosses were hesitant about implementing such policies for security reasons, giving as an example the exchange of confidential company matters.

"In offices, companies have installed various firewalls as security measures, but for personal computers at home, security is weaker."

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers vice-president Nathan K Suppiah said some companies that might not be able to shift their entire operations to a work-from-home model could find it possible to shift operations such as sales, marketing, finance, accounts and human resources to remote stations.

He also said there could be staggered work-from-home procedures for groups of employees, especially those who were not in the production line.

However, he said working from home would not be effective for labour-intensive manufacturing operations that were not fully automated.

Although some of these processes could be done using digital tools, he added, they would require time and money that some companies could not afford.

"Nevertheless, we believe that the preparedness level may have improved over the past few months as businesses have put in place their business continuity plans should the situation force businesses to operate under conditions similar to those associated with the MCO," he said.



*Nathan K Suppiah.*

"We believe that businesses would have developed customised work-from-home models to suit their needs."