

# No need to work from home but bosses fear worksite clusters

By **Predeep Nambiar** - April 2, 2021 7:30 AM



*The government has decided to lift the 30% workforce restriction in CMCO states. (Bernama pic)*

PETALING JAYA: Several groups have expressed concern that the lifting of the 30% workforce restriction in conditional movement control order (CMCO) states may spark Covid-19 clusters in offices and worksites.

The work from home (WFH) policy for the public sector and industries has been lifted to allow businesses, especially factories, to operate at full capacity.

Malaysian Employers Federation president Syed Hussain Syed Husman welcomed the move, saying most businesses were struggling to stay afloat.

“The decision to remove the 30% limit for management staff to work in office is a positive step. Employers must be responsible and take steps to ensure the workplace is free from contamination.

“They may also consider allowing certain employees to work from home, based on the nature of their job,” he said in a statement.

Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) deputy president Mohd Effendy Abdul Ghani said the government should consider vaccinating workers in the manufacturing sector to stem the spread of Covid-19.

“While the full-force work allowance is good news for the workers and the economy, the manufacturing and servicing sector staff remain vulnerable.

"The way forward is to vaccinate them ahead of the second phase, so we can be assured of smooth operations in the sector, which will not pose any threat to the economy," he said.

Penang MTUC secretary K Veeriah said the authorities should not entirely do away with work from home as it had become a feature of the working culture.

He said workers were cautious about returning to the office or workplace.

"We should not abandon WFH just because some people are making demands. We should only consider it when the situation comes down to manageable levels.

"I fully support Cuepacs' call for WFH to continue until the Covid-19 numbers abate," he said.

The Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Service had urged Putrajaya to allow WFH to continue as Covid-19 numbers were still in the four-digit range.

Cuepacs said the WFH option should be retained until herd immunity was achieved.

Former deputy health minister Dr Lee Boon Chye said it was good that the 30% workforce quota was done away with, as it was difficult to implement due to varying hierarchies in different companies, especially small and medium enterprises.

He said while people came back to work and more were vaccinated, physical distancing should be the norm for the next six to 12 months.

Lee said in view of the return of the workforce, the health ministry must ramp up its contact tracing unit to immediately stem any workplace Covid-19 spread.

He said the lesson from the Teratai cluster, which saw more than 7,000 infected, ought to serve as a lesson.

"Otherwise, we may have to revert to MCO, which is a crude way of controlling the spread of Covid-19, and the economy will suffer again. Physical distancing and the wearing of masks must be strictly followed, even as the vaccine rollout is ongoing," he said.

Lee said sporadic cases could be expected as the workforce would be at full capacity and schools were in session.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Subramaniam Muniandy said while the WFH ruling had been lifted, there was no reason to rejoice, as the risk of contracting Covid-19 at the workplace remained.

"Risk of infection can increase when more people are added to the workplace. Therefore, the SOPs must strictly be adhered to," he said.

"If physical distancing is not possible due to space constraints, some of the staff should still work from home."