

Give us 1 to 3 years to improve housing for workers, say bosses

By **Nora Mahpar** - April 19, 2021 11:11 AM



The Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 was enforced last September.

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has pleaded for one to three years to fulfil the requirements under the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 (Act 446) as many companies are still recovering from the pandemic.

Its executive director, Shamsuddin Bardan, said employers had been given limited time to comply with Act 446 when it was enforced on Sept 1 last year.

He said it had been difficult to fulfil the requirements due to a lack of funds as a result of the pandemic and its restrictions.

"Most of the regulations under the Act involve a lot of costs and even now, many companies are still financially unstable," he told FMT.

Shamsuddin was responding to news reports that 10,961 out of 14,835 employers were found not complying with Act 446 during inspections conducted by the Labour Department from Feb 1 to April 15.

Among the offences were providing accommodation not certified by the department's director-general, non-compliance with local authority laws and not providing rest and dining areas to employees.

Shamsuddin said that making arrangements for employees' housing often involved dealing with the Labour Department and the local authorities in the area, which could take some time.

According to him, improving existing staff quarters took at least a year, while building new accommodation and providing the necessary amenities required two to three years.

He urged the department not to issue fines against employers who have already submitted their applications under the Act.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) deputy president Mohd Effendy Abdul Ghani said employers had long been taking advantage of foreign workers.

However, he said, it only became apparent once the pandemic hit, causing a surge of Covid-19 clusters among foreign workers.

“The lack of government enforcement has caused many employers to be careless with employees’ housing, especially when it involves foreign workers,” he said.

Effendy called for stricter enforcement and better monitoring against employers who fail to comply with Act 446, adding that MTUC was ready to work with the government to conduct checks on foreign workers’ housing.