

Employers Federation supports govt effort to work with US Customs and Border Protection to address forced labour issues

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A general view of a palm oil plantation in Kuala Selangor January 2, 2020. — Picture by Yusof Mat Isa

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 15 — Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has expressed support for the government's initiatives to

explore more business opportunities with the United States (US), including the move to work together with the US Department of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in addressing forced labour issues.

“The initiative to set up a working committee with the US CBP to address the issues of forced labour will be able to resolve some of the outstanding withhold release orders (WROs) imposed on some of the Malaysian exporters to the US,” MEF president Datuk Syed Hussain Syed Husman said in a statement here today.

Allegations of forced labour practices have resulted in the US border agency issuing WROs against several Malaysian companies that export their products to the US, especially those in the rubber glove and palm oil industries.

“With the establishment of the working committee, it would be easier to deal with the outstanding issues with the US and the various related agencies. These efforts taken by Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri M. Saravanan in conjunction with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob’s visit to the US is indeed timely,” he said.

In a statement on Friday, Saravanan said the committee, which is scheduled to meet every three months, would focus on exchanging information, including formulating policies that could support the country's initiatives towards combatting forced labour.

The US CBP is also expected to make a working visit to Malaysia at the end of May and hold a workshop with the country's industry players.

“The workshop will shed light on matters related to elements of forced labour that should be avoided by industry players so that their products will not be banned from entering the US market,” the minister said. — Bernama