

## Employers question longer quarantine, fortnightly Covid tests for workers under new SOPs

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*The Malaysian Employers Federation says testing all workers every two weeks whether or not they are asymptomatic will put a huge financial burden on businesses that are struggling to regain their footing.*

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) today questioned the SOPs for quarantine and testing under the government's National Recovery Plan (NRP), saying the latest rules appear at odds with Putrajaya's stated goal of easing movement restrictions for the fully vaccinated and addressing the balance between lives and livelihoods.

MEF president Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the organisation had received many complaints from its members about the SOPs which state among others that the quarantine period including for fully vaccinated workers is 14 days.

“During MCO 1.0 when vaccines were not fully rolled out, the quarantine period for staff to work offsite was only three days,” he said.

He also questioned the need to test all employees in the manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying sectors in areas under the first three phases of the NRP on a fortnightly basis.

“Given the cost of RTK Antigen test kits at RM40 each, a manufacturer with 1,000 employees would have to pay RM80,000 to test all employees every two weeks.

“In a month, the cost would amount to RM160,000 just for test kits.”

In a statement, he cited a loss of productivity due to such disruptions, the stress to logistics operators and the anxiety levels of staff who would have to provide samples for testing every two weeks.

“We are also perplexed by the requirement to test all employees contrary to the policy to test symptomatic employees only and to exclude asymptomatic individuals.

“Businesses are just opening up with no jobs yet in hand while having to deal with collection and cash flow issues,” he added.

“The latest SOPs will just kill more businesses.”

Adding that extra costs and stress to businesses at a time when they could not even manage salaries and overheads was “too much”, he said: “This is not right.”