

MINIMISING INFECTIONS

ENSURING CONDUCTIVE HOUSING FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Industry, govt have a role to play to make it happen, says MEF

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THE construction sector believes that while the onus is on employers to ensure that foreign workers have conducive living quarters, the government has a role to play in making that happen.

It believed that the economic downturn had made it difficult to provide workers with accommodation that would minimise the risk of Covid-19 infection among workers.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan described the dilemma as "a sticky issue".

"Most employers in the construction industry face cash-flow constraints, so it's very challenging to improve workers' living quarters now.

"The government should allow employers to charge a slightly higher fee for workers' accommodation, instead of capping it at RM100 per month."

Shamsuddin urged industry players to adhere to the standard operating procedures to break the chain of infection.

"The nature of the construction industry is such that there are



The economic downturn makes it challenging to improve construction workers' living quarters. (Inset) Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan. FILE PIC

many contractors and subcontractors with their own workers. So all must observe the SOP.

"Besides, the government should not only focus on enforcing the law, but also on educating and creating awareness among construction workers.

"While employers can communicate with the workers directly on issues related to Covid-19, it is more effective if healthcare personnel from the Health Ministry brief workers about maintaining good hygiene."

The construction sector has been hard hit since the Move-

ment Control Order was initiated on March 18, which led to the suspension of many projects.

It reportedly recorded losses of about RM18.5 billion and recorded the biggest decline this year at 44.5 per cent.

Prior to the construction industry resuming operations in May, the government announced that foreign workers had to undergo swab tests and that employers would pay for it.

Master Builders Association Malaysia president Foo Chek Lee urged the government to provide subsidies to employers for

healthcare maintenance.

"The government should provide subsidies to lower the cost of sanitation and buying personal protective equipment.

"There is also a need to identify more health check centres, and labs should be set up to avoid congestion and cut waiting time."

Foo urged the government to set up camps to house quarantined workers.

"They should determine the locations or buildings to house quarantined workers in each region based on the Health Ministry's requirements."