Bosses, workers easing into work-from-home

By Teh Athira Yusof, Farah Solhi - October 23, 2020 @ 10:40am

A civil servant carrying her baby while working from home in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. - NSTP/MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

KUALA LUMPUR: Employers decided to adopt their own measures in maintaining the safety of their staff during the Covid-19 pandemic while employees lamented the lack of infrastructure at home, as the first day of the work-from-home order rolled out yesterday.

Fintech company, pitchIN co-founder and chief information officer Kashminder Singh said the company had already maintained a work-from-home and office rotation schedule for employees since the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented in March.

He said the company recently adopted a full work-from-home regime following the government's announcement under the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) to curb Covid-19 infections.

"Being a fintech (financial technology) company, pitchIN has been able to weather disruptions caused by the pandemic, so when the MCO was imposed, we were able to do the transition without any problems," he said.

Kashminder said throughout the work-from-home order, his team had no issues with getting stable Internet as they were based in urban areas such as the Klang Valley and Penang.

"Our team members also have access to online meeting software, online files hosting and more," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Kota Kinabalu Industrial Park (KKIP) Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Melvin Disimond said following the Sabah government directive on Wednesday, the company was allowed to have a maximum of 30 per cent of staff to work from the office.

"The directive was communicated to the staff and we issued letters to those who needed to work at the office," he said, adding that the company staff went for the Covid-19 swab test on Oct 6 and all tested negative.

Disimond said KKIP was ready to face any challenges during the pandemic through its new working committee.

"Most of our staff are based in Kota Kinabalu and adjacent areas such as Penampang, Tuaran and Putatan. So far, we have not experienced any major obstacles to maintaining productivity. We also set up our company's intranet system to allow us to share files and information.

"Those having issues with getting fixed Internet lines are told to use smartphone applications such as WhatsApp to ensure smooth information flow," he said.

Working from home proved to be a real challenge for marketing and communication executive Nur Syafiqah Azman, 24, as her house did not come with a stable Internet connection.

Syafiqah, who works at a non-governmental organisation, said her organisation had been conducting teleconferences but conditions at her home were not conducive for virtual meetings.

"I have resorted to using my own mobile data hotspot due to the lack of access at home.

"Honestly, I prefer working in the office as we have better infrastructure, making it easier to communicate with one another," she said, adding that she was unable to set up a proper workstation at her shared rental house.

Together with her three housemates, she said they congregated at the dining table which now served as their office.

She hoped clearer guidelines on the work-from-home order would be issued in the future, should it be enforced again.

Shafadzlin Shaharir, 24, who works as a writer for a production company, said her company had instructed all employees to work from home and would apply a rostering system where employees work on a four-hour, three-day week cycle.

"As for now, we have not received the roster from the human resources department. But we were made to understand that if we need to go to the office from 10am to 2pm, we are required to complete the remaining hours of the shift at home," she said.

Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan

Meanwhile, Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said it had received complaints from non-management and supervisory employees who were stopped at roadblocks on their way to work.

"They were told that employees must have a permit from the police to go to work. What we understand is that the permit is needed only if a person has to cross districts.

"They said approval letters from their employers were not accepted as they were not in the management and supervisory categories. They were told to return home, in line with the government's directive," he told *Berita Harian* yesterday.

On Tuesday, Senior Minister (Security Cluster) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob announced that all private and public sector workers in management and supervisory roles in red zones during the CMCO were instructed to work from home starting yesterday. **-- Additional reporting by Luqman Arif Abdul Karim**