

MEF: Industries require foreign workers to run at full speed

By [Farah Solhi](#) - April 5, 2021 @ 2:50pm



The Malaysia Employers' Federation (MEF) said while the Covid-19 pandemic provided employers the impetus towards increased automation, mechanisation and digitalisation, the availability of foreign workers still remains a critical factor. - KHIS/HAZREEN MOHAMAD

KUALA LUMPUR: Industries dependent on foreign workers to resume operations have called for government intervention to resolve the issue.

The Malaysia Employers' Federation (MEF) said while the Covid-19 pandemic provided employers the impetus towards increased automation, mechanisation and digitalisation, the availability of foreign workers still remains a critical factor.

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P said foreign workers were still crucially needed to resuscitate and revitalise the economy, especially in the 3D areas.

"The government has responded positively to employers' calls for financial support and other assistance.

"This can be seen through the support offered by the government such as the Prihatin, Penjana and Pemerkasa initiatives that assisted employers and employees during these difficult times.

"However, with the gradual removal of movement restrictions and cash flow assistance, employers are now trying to regain business traction.

"But there were still numerous economic activities that are unable to resume operations because the manpower required is not there," he said in a statement, today.

Syed Hussain said MEF's members have been appealing for government intervention, including assistance in providing the manpower needed to support these industries, to bring the industry fully up to speed.

"Our members are appealing for these resources to get their businesses going because there are no workers.

"This situation cuts across the construction, plantation, manufacturing and services sectors.

"For example, the plantation sector has reported a shortage of 40,000 workers and lost RM10 billion in 2020, and these losses are not recoverable.

"The employers had no choice but to depend on foreign workers although the cost of hiring foreign workers was much higher than hiring local workers, and could go up to RM15,000 to RM20,000 per foreign worker.

"The recruitment and related costs for hiring foreign workers is much more expensive than hiring locals and despite all our efforts to engage with local workers, employers could not attract them to work in these sectors," he said.

According to the Employment Insurance System (EIS), Syed Hussain said there were about 1.38 million legal foreign workers in Malaysia as of November 2020.

"There are only 30,000 foreign workers registered under the foreign workers' recalibration programme.

"The government should focus on ensuring efficient regulation of foreign workers to be able to manage them in a highly controlled manner instead of imposing restrictions that would be difficult to enforce.

"To this, we urge the government to set up a special task force on foreign workers urgently.

"There are capable expertise and experience in the Home Affairs Ministry and the Human Resources Ministry to look into this matter.

"In fact, we are willing to provide support if required," he said.