

MEF calls on government to end lockdown

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The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has urged the government to end the Full Movement Control Order (FMCO) with immediate effect to stop further damage to the national economy and individual livelihoods. - Bernama file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has urged the government to end the Full Movement Control Order (FMCO) with immediate effect to stop further damage to the national economy and individual livelihoods.

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. said the lockdown has had a negative effect on businesses since the first MCO implemented in March last year, with many companies being forced to shut down, thus causing higher retrenchments and loss of income.

"There has to be a reasonable balance between the saving of lives and livelihoods. The restrictions under the FMCO and confusion over the SOPs are killing businesses with many SMEs (small-medium enterprises) and micro enterprises severely impacted.

"Employers are prepared to endure even tighter restrictions under FMCO and even higher penalties for breaking the rules to end the lockdown, but the issue of livelihoods must also be addressed.

"We urge the government to allow all sectors to operate because if the current situation continues, we risk facing very serious economic and social implications for a long time," he said in a statement today.

Citing recent distressing reports from the SMEs, manufacturers, retail sectors and Bumiputera entrepreneurs, he said companies in the non-essential sectors could not survive and thousands would be forced to shut down should the lockdown remain enforced for much longer.

"Some of the micro enterprises and SMEs are suffering to a level beyond recovery and need urgent help," he said.

Furthermore, he said companies allowed to operate were also facing serious issues as they depend on their supply chain for supplies, but many of those in the supply chain are not allowed to operate.

"Most of all, the implications extend beyond employers to the ordinary man on the street who needs to put food on the table and meet his basic commitments.

"We need to open up and provide financial aid quickly," he said.

In expressing support to the Covid-19 National Immunisation Plan, he concurred with the government that Covid-19 may become endemic and that Malaysians would have to learn to live with it in the long term, just like the flu and dengue.

"We support and encourage our employees and their families to be inoculated, and in fact the number of people getting the jab is increasing.

"We also hear from our employees that many of their aged parents (above 60 years) are still waiting for appointments, and in some cases have yet to receive any date for appointment.

"This creates stress on certain employees which would then impact their work and productivity."

In addressing this, he suggested that all parents above 60 years be given automatic approval to be vaccinated at the vaccine centres under the senior citizens group.