

Bosses ready to observe ‘new norms’

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By **HEMANANTHANI SIVANANDAM, ALLISON LAI** and **TARRENCE TAN**



Prepared for what's next: Datuk Michael Kang.

PETALING JAYA: Businesses are willing to embrace the “new norms” in operations to ensure sustainability and productivity, following the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected many economic sectors.

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said all companies would eventually need to adopt the practice of social distancing, have their staff wear face masks and keep up

with personal hygiene.

Other than public health, he said adhering to the new norms was also critical to ensure business survival.

“All companies and the people will need to follow these new norms for the sake of public health, especially at this critical time.



Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai

“At this juncture, business activity has been severely affected. We need to prevent more unemployment,” he said yesterday.

In allowing businesses to be fully operational, Soh said it was critical to have Covid-19 screening made available to workers at no charge, which Socso is arranging. “Tests and early detection are very important for peace of mind so that the workforce can focus on their jobs to revive the economy,” he said, adding that FMM was grateful to the ministry for the relaxation of the conditions for companies to operate.

Reminding industry players to strictly observe the precautionary measures stipulated by the International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti) and Health Ministry, Soh said successful control of the spread of the virus would allow for more sectors to operate during the movement control order (MCO) period.

SME Association president Datuk Michael Kang said the announcement by the government was timely as businesses were finding it difficult to operate in the limited time frame of 8am to 8pm daily.

“This is because it takes a lot of time to start up and shut down machinery in factories, thus affecting operations,” he said.



Dr N. Ganabaskaran

Kang said many factories had standard operating procedure (SOP) that was in line with Health Ministry guidelines.

“The SOP that includes social distancing, sanitising areas and taking temperatures, among others, is important because we want to ensure our workers are safe.

“We hope our members will follow the SOP not just during but also post-MCO.

“This will become our new norms in operations so factories and businesses need to find solutions to improve their productivity,” he said when contacted.

Kang said businesses must adhere to these new norms and follow the SOP or risk being shut down, which would be a costly affair for them.

Malaysia Retail Chain Association president Datuk Seri Garry Chua said health and hygiene were major concerns in any society and industry players in the retail sector must take note of those needs.

“The relaxed rules will benefit manufacturers, especially those that can afford to adopt more automation, which would resolve the need to have social distancing,” he said.

He also called for such flexibility to be given in stages to the food and beverage industry, adding that the government’s effort in kick-starting it gave time to the people to adjust and adhere to the new way of life.



Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the private sector would play its part in trying to control the spread of Covid-19.

He hoped that with the announcement, companies would be able to operate without running into problems with local authorities.

“We have problems with local authorities because they are restrictive and interpret the approvals by Miti based on their own standards.

“I hope that would be a thing of the past. We are thankful to the government in allowing full operations to resume as it is the right step to balance the health aspect and livelihood of employees,” he said.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr N. Ganabaskaran said businesses must strictly adhere to SOP with all of its staff continuing to observe precautionary measures.

“Steps should also be taken to monitor the operations of these businesses from time to time to ensure full compliance to the guidelines and conditions,” he said.

Economists meanwhile said the government’s decision could ease the ongoing Covid-19 economic fallout.

Sunway University economics professor Dr Yeah Kim Leng said these companies should be able to demonstrate full compliance with the SOP required to prevent Covid-19.

“That should ease the huge economic cost of movement restrictions and enable the economy to get on its feet more quickly while keeping infections at bay,” he said.

Yeah also stressed that employers must take responsibility for any Covid-19 outbreak that may occur at their workplace.