

MEF: More clarity needed on Work-From-Home directive

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PETALING JAYA: More clarity is needed on the government's Work-From-Home (WFH) directive even as the authorities recently announced that up to 10% of those in management and supervisory roles are allowed to work on site, says the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

Its executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the new ruling was "difficult to understand", especially as some companies have small workforces.

"If your company is big, 10% makes sense. But if your company is smaller, assuming that you have five

"Does that mean they cannot come into the office? Then who would run operations," he said when contacted on Wednesday (Oct 21).

He suggested that it would be better if a maximum number of people allowed in the office was stipulated, according to the size of the business.

Shamsuddin added that it does not make good economic sense to have workers coming into the office three days a week for only four hours each day, especially if the commute is long.

"Many people are also questioning why night markets and shopping malls are allowed to open without restrictions, but there are all these restrictions for offices. Is the office environment riskier?" he said.

Shamsuddin said there was also confusion over why the directive does not apply to office staff in non-managerial positions.

"It is peculiar why this directive is limited to only those in managerial and supervisory roles. Since the government declared Klang Valley to undergo the conditional movement control order (MCO), many employers already adopted WFH arrangements.

"Some have conducted work rotation among staff so that at any given time, there will only be about 50% of the workforce in the office," he said.

Shamsuddin said while the Human Resources Ministry has also announced that the Social Security Organisation (Socso) contributors can go for free Covid-19 screenings, he was concerned about the time loss that companies face while the results are pending.

"We are thankful for the clarification and it is proper that the companies are the ones who make the appointment with Socso directly. However, the major issue is whether the Socso panel (clinics) can cope with the sudden surge of demand for Covid-19 tests.

"The question is also whether those who need to be tested are those in managerial and supervisory roles? Or does it apply to all workers living in the red zones?

"The swab tests also take some time before results can be seen, unless we conduct the rapid tests instead," he said, adding that employers would also have to fork out additional costs for the tests as Socso is only subsidising up to RM150 for each employee.

On Wednesday (Oct 21), International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, said in a statement that a maximum of 10% of those in management and supervisory posts are permitted to work on site.

He said these workers will only be allowed to enter their workplaces for four hours (10am-2pm) each day, for no more than three days a week, and need to get a letter from their employers for the purpose.