

'Fix logistical issues to contain outbreaks'

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PETALING JAYA: Logistical challenges must be addressed in order to contain the Covid-19 outbreaks among the migrant workers community, say employers and workers.

This comes as a surge of cases is expected from the mandatory screening among foreign workers, especially those at construction sites and factories.

The mandatory screening on foreign workers began on Dec 1.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan (*pic*) said companies are having to make arrangements with the service providers on how best to get their workers screened.

“Employers have to minimise disruption to the operations. They can try to make proper arrangements with the service providers to come to their site to do the screening.

“Companies have to work closely with the health authorities in the event their workers have been tested positive, especially in regards to the provision of quarantine stations,” he said, adding that some employers faced difficulty in getting the Covid-19 screening completed, as some panel clinics did not have the test kits yet.

He also raised questions as to whether the tests need to be done periodically, and what are the financial implications of stipulating regular screenings.

Health expert Prof Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said one challenge in containing the spread was that workers were scattered all over the Klang Valley as some of them do not live in proper centralised quarters.

Major Covid-19 clusters linked to factories and construction sites (as at Dec 11)

▪ **Teratai (5,435 cases)**

Linked to Top Glove workers' dormitories in Meru, Klang

▪ **Damanlela (1,794 cases)**

Linked to a construction site at Jalan Damanlela in Kuala Lumpur

▪ **Hentian (1,733 cases)**

Involves workers based at Hulu Langat

▪ **Kaya (1,069 cases)**

Located in Putrajaya and Negri Sembilan involved MAB Kargo employees

▪ **Seruling (1,064 cases)**

Involves factory workers in Klang

▪ **Perigi cluster (850 cases)**

Detected through a workplace screening among workers in Klang, Selangor.

▪ **Bintang cluster (481 cases)**

Involves workers from a construction

site at the Lembah Pantai district in Kuala Lumpur

▪ **Tapak Bina Awan Baru (431 cases)**

Involves workers at a construction site in Bandar Baru Sentul, Kuala Lumpur

▪ **Sungai Putus (427 cases)**

Detected in a screening at a factory in Klang

▪ **Tapak Bina Puteh Lama (421 cases)**

Involves workers at a construction site in the Lembah Pantai district, Kuala Lumpur

▪ **Tapak Bina Jalan Bukit (47 cases)**

Linked to workers at a construction site in Hulu Langat, Selangor

▪ **Tapak Bina Condong (24 cases)**

Detected in a construction site, and involves the districts of Lembah Pantai, Titiwangsa and Cheras in Kuala Lumpur

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“It is difficult to contain because of that. Moreover, the workers are being moved around as they work on different construction projects.

“It becomes a double whammy, and it can lead to community transmission,” said the Universiti Malaya virologist when contacted.

The virus, he added, might be more easily transmissible in the community as migrant workers in such sites would also live with those who work in other sectors such as petrol stations or sundry shops.

“This is especially so as travel bans have been lifted and some construction projects may have been temporarily halted, leading to more workers travelling,” he said.

He said that as such, more mass screenings had to be conducted aggressively in the community, rather than relying on a more “targeted” approach as in the past.

National Association of Human Resources Malaysia president Zarina Ismail said companies would need to monitor the living conditions of their foreign workers.

New cases in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor compared to total daily cases

Date	K. Lumpur	Selangor	% of total daily cases
Dec-11	132	829	53
Dec-10	136	1,428	70
Dec-09	129	277	42.3
Dec-08	98	417	50.8
Dec-07	148	426	35.8
Dec-06	178	337	38.5
Dec-05	265	221	43.2
Dec-04	256	320	50.4
Dec-03	49	459	47.2
Dec-02	85	249	39.2
Dec-01	26	891	62.2

Source: Health Ministry

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“The workers must follow physical distancing and to wear masks, not only during working hours but also during their journey to work and to their hostels,” she said.

“Companies must educate their workers and visit their dormitories or hostels to ensure that the minimum housing standards are met.”

She added that workers should not stay in dormitories which are too congested and in those which have not gotten the necessary approval from the local authorities.

Association of Employment Agencies president Datuk Foo Yong Hooi added that information on the prevention of Covid-19 transmission must be conveyed clearly to the migrant workers, especially in their native languages.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah had warned the country to brace for further spikes in workplace infections, especially in Selangor.