

## SOP monitoring needs to be tightened, says MEF

---

By ASHLEY TANG

**NATION**

Friday, 17 Dec 2021

PETALING JAYA: The government must give due emphasis to compliance with the standard operating procedures (SOPs) set by the National Security Council and Health Ministry to curb Covid-19, says the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said while current SOPs are adequate, there is visible lack of public discipline and compliance, which needs to be corrected.

He added that as early data suggests that the Omicron variant of concern can be resistant to vaccines and more transmissible, the best course of action is to tighten prevention.

“At an individual level, everybody must practise the SOPs strictly, such as physical distancing, wearing a mask in public or at gatherings, and sanitising or washing their hands with soap as often as possible.

“Although the steps look straightforward and simple, the issue is the rakyat’s lack of discipline due to SOP fatigue after almost two years of battling the pandemic,” he said, adding that laxity can be observed almost everywhere.

To improve this, Syed Hussain said the government needs to improve monitoring and enforcement in public areas, workplaces and gatherings, as well as tourist attractions, places of worship, parks and shopping malls.

He added that the days where police officers and army personnel were deployed for the movement control order should be reinstated to ensure stricter compliance with SOPs, noting that enforcement was “tight and effective” then.

Syed Hussain pointed out that the government and its agencies, too, must follow the SOP, and action should be taken without fear or favour if there is a breach.

“For the workplace, the employer should consider work-from-home (WFH) as one of the prevention strategies,” he said, adding that alternatives to WFH could include rostering the workforce to ensure adequate physical distancing at the workplace.

Syed Hussain said MEF also advised its members to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Department guidelines on ventilation and indoor air quality as part of the strategy to reduce Covid-19 transmission.

“Another important prevention strategy is to ensure that any worker who has symptoms should not be allowed to enter the premises, and should be immediately tested and sent for further monitoring at a healthcare facility,” he said.

He appealed to employers not to compromise by letting any symptomatic worker into the workplace, no matter how mild the symptoms.

“MEF would also like to appeal to the Social Security Organisation (Socso) to continue the free Covid-19 RTK antigen or RT-PCR test kit programme for all insured persons.

“MEF is of the view that the efforts by Socso are commendable. In the current scenario, this programme is very significant and has helped employers tremendously, especially small companies and enterprises that have limited resources,” he added.

Separately, the Malaysia Retail Chain Association (MRCA) said while it is too early to determine the risks posed by the Omicron variant, preventive measures such as booster shots and strict enforcement of mask-wearing, good sanitation practices and physical distancing would be the first line of defence.

MRCA said these measures are especially important as sudden economic restrictions or lockdowns would not only be counterproductive to the country’s growth but may not be as effective, too.

“Compliance is key in containing the spread of this new variant.

“We believe that businesses are generally compliant with the rules set by the National Security Council and the Health Ministry, and should be allowed to operate as usual.

“We urge all retailers and businesses to strictly adhere to existing SOPs which most, if not all, have been practising,” it said.

The MRCA also said the government should do more publicity on the safety of mixing vaccines for booster doses and make the vaccination process as easy as possible, as well as incentivise the public to go for booster shots.