

MEF: Prolonged FMCO will only add to financial and mental stress

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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has expressed serious concerns over the extension of the Full Movement Control Order (FMCO).

It said this would escalate the present stressful situation risking severe irreparable damage to the economy and society.

“Stress brought about by the prolonged lockdown has become more widespread and destructive than Covid-19 with reports of incidences of social issues rapidly rising,” said MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman (*pix*) said yesterday.

“Many employers had ceased operations and many more were planning to close. With the extension of the lockdown, more employers are left without any other option but to close.

“This situation has created mental stress among employers, employees and the man on the street, and many already require medical attention. And when businesses can no longer survive, what can the employers do with their employees?”

Recognising the increasing number of incidences of mental illness, crime, domestic violence, suicide, homelessness, he said the implications were much worse as it affected families and communities, and may even destroy a nation.

“People should not be deprived of making a living and no amount of financial aid will be able to address this issue,” Syed Hussain said.

“There is no ‘vaccine’ for stress and mental illness which takes much longer to heal not to mention the long-term effects.

“If the right to livelihood is curtailed for long periods, everyone will suffer, including the government that would then need to resort to internal and external borrowings, and this only reinforces the vicious cycle.

“We appreciate the government’s efforts to intensify vaccination by various methods to reach both urban and rural folks.

“But the need to earn a living is paramount and we must open up and end the FMCO. There has to be some relaxation to allow people to conduct business and this needs to be done urgently.

“Our peoples’ mental health is equally as important as getting vaccinated and we hope the NSC (National Security Council) and government would listen to our pleas

“It is more rational to allow businesses to operate under strict SOPs, and everyone must play our part to beat the dreadful Covid-19 scourge.

“Mental health must now be given priority, and mental health relates closely to financial stability.”

Syed Hussain stressed that employers should be allowed to resume their operations to sustain their businesses and continue to employ their employees and thus at the same time assist the nation’s economy to recover faster.

“It would also greatly assist businesses and the rakyat for vaccinations to be urgently speeded up especially to all the employees, and not only those covered by PIKAS, to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infections and allow private sector employers to resume full operations without disruptions.

“Enforcing full lockdown by allowing only 17 economic sectors to operate since June 1, 2021 up till now had not seen a reduction of new Covid-19 infections as the new cases are averaging above 5,000 cases per day.

“The government needs to admit that the lockdown had not been able to produce the desired results and therefore should not be continued any further.

“Instead of prolonging the FMCO which proved to be ineffective to address the issues of lives and livelihoods, the government should introduce new measures by allowing employers that are able to comply and adhere to the established SOPs to resume and operate its businesses fully.

“We need to realise that the fight against Covid-19 is not about implementing full lockdown. The lockdown really hurts the employers, employees, the rakyat and the nation.

“As it is now the nation loses RM1 billion for everyday of lockdown and Malaysia can no longer absorb such huge losses,” he added.