

FMM, MEF call for immediate opening of all economic sectors

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PETALING JAYA: The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) today called on the government to open up all economic sectors immediately based on company-level vaccination rates, failing which more businesses will have to fold up with irreparable damage to the economy and the risk of going into a recession with a long recovery period.

FMM president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said industry is most concerned with the prolonged closure of non-essential sectors for almost three months now.

“While FMM notes and welcomes the easing of restrictions for individuals who have been fully vaccinated, we look forward to similar easing of restrictions on the business sectors which is desperately needed to ensure business viability as many are on the brink of collapse due to the extended business closure,” he said in a statement.

Soh said that with the ramping up of the national immunisation programme, it is imperative for the government to immediately remove the segregation of essential and non-essential sectors since businesses are interconnected whereby the continuation of operations of the so-called essential sectors requires support from the non-essential sectors for inputs and critical services.

“Much effort, time and financial resources have been deployed by employers to ramp up their company-level vaccinations as they recognise it is their only ticket to returning to normalcy in their business operations and sustainability.”

Meanwhile, employers in states under Phase 1 of the National Recovery Plan – especially micro enterprises and SMEs in the non-essential sectors – are eagerly looking forward to the easing of restrictions on social and business activities.

“We appreciate the ease of restrictions for Phase 2 regions, but the impact on businesses and livelihoods in KL and Selangor is huge especially for the non-essential sectors. The economic stress has become far greater than the physical stress because it can kill the business and all those involved in it,” Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said in a statement today.

He said SMEs that are today classified as non-essential may be viewed as such by the government but they are essential to the businesses and to the livelihoods of the employees and their families. It has been almost four months of lockdown for many of these SMEs and this has devastated the retail industry. Barbers, locksmiths, car wash, salons, gift shops are among those who continue to suffer.

MEF appealed to the government to provide the necessary assistance to open up the economy.

“MEF is all for opening of the economy and we must stop using phases to decide on the economy but instead to zoom in, isolate and treat those in the red zones. The authorities should adopt a combined strategy of rapid vaccination and to open up businesses with strict SOPs immediately. The employers are committed to implement and abide by all the necessary SOPs and MEF even supports tougher action against recalcitrant employers.”

Syed Hussain also urged the authorities to be reasonable in formulating plans to contain the spread of Covid-19 infections.

“Despite the prolonged lockdowns, it is clear that the number of those infected have kept increasing. This must lead to some conclusion that the lockdowns are not the answer. The single strategy of mass vaccination prior to opening the economy has not worked. Let’s move towards a combined strategy so more people can have less stress,” he said.