

Construction workers among the worst hit



Monday, April 13th, 2020 at , Economy (<https://themalaysianreserve.com/category/economy/>) | News (<https://themalaysianreserve.com/category/news/>)

About 450,000 legal foreign workers in the industry have to take a pay hit during this unprecedented MCO

by DASHVEENJIT KAUR/ pic by MUHD AMIN NAHARUL

CONSTRUCTION workers are among the worst hit during the Movement Control Order (MCO), with very little to fall back on as the majority are daily-wage earners.

The Malaysian Employers Federation ED Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said construction workers have to take a pay hit as Malaysia grinds to a halt with a four-week MCO in place to curtail the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

As it is, Samsuddin said there are about 450,000 legal foreign workers in the construction industry, a sector that is considered non-essential by the government during the MCO.

“As operations within the construction sector take a pause during this period, its workers — be it locals or foreigners — take the worst hit, as most are completely dependent on what they earn each day.

“Within the construction industry, workers mostly get paid on a daily basis, which means many are surviving without any income as we speak,” he told *The Malaysian Reserve*.

Shamsuddin said most employers are steadfast with the principle of only paying their employees based on the days of work.

“Our country has never gone through an MCO. This is the first time, and of course, the issue of pay would come into place, whether or not employers would still pay their workers during this period when there is, in fact, no work to be done.

“However, there are also employers that still pay — a half month salary at least,” he added.

In terms of livelihood, Shamsuddin reckons that legal foreign workers overall are being well taken care of by their respective employers.

“Logistics support such as housing and medical assistance for foreign workers continues as before.

“The Health Insurance Coverage Scheme for Foreign Workers and Employment Injury Scheme under the Social Security Organisation protect a migrant’s right to obtain healthcare,” he said, adding that if contracted with the virus, legal foreign workers can get the necessary treatment.

Unfortunately, Shamsuddin said, illegal foreign workers are not protected at any cost, a double whammy for those working in the construction sector.

“The only problem now within the construction industry is the illegal foreign workers. The number of undocumented foreign workers in this sector is so much higher than the legal ones,” he said, leaving them helpless as they are not able to seek for assistance.

He believes employers of the illegal foreign workers should take responsibility and take care of their employees’ wellbeing during this period.

“Of course it is easier said than done. Ultimately, to overcome this, the authorities can perhaps assist this group of people to return to their respective countries without any kind of sanction — purely on humanitarian grounds,” he added.

In the meantime, Shamsuddin said the government should be stricter with illegal foreign workers in the future in order to send the right message across.