

Latest National Recovery Plan SOPs ‘perplexing and contradictory’: MEF

Manufacturing, construction, mining, quarrying sectors must bear high cost of testing all staff every 2 weeks

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Datuk Syed Hussain Syed Husman slams the latest National Recovery Plan SOPs, saying they will just kill more businesses. – MEF pic, August 26, 2021

KUALA LUMPUR – The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has criticised the latest standard operating procedures (SOPs) issued by the National Security Council (NSC) for regions in Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the National Recovery Plan (NRP).

Its president Datuk Syed Hussain Syed Husman said that employers are perplexed as the new SOPs for all three phases do not make sense as they contradict the government’s policy on easing movement for fully vaccinated individuals and addressing the priorities between saving lives and livelihoods.

“During the movement control order (MCO) 1.0 when vaccines were not fully rolled out, the quarantine period for staff to work off-site was only three days.

“However, based on the latest SOPs, the quarantine period is now extended to 14 days and this applies to fully vaccinated employees.

“Employers in the manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying sectors in the concerned regions are now required to test all employees once every fortnight including the fully vaccinated, and this is at the cost of the employers,” Syed Hussain said in a statement today.

He said a manufacturer with 1,000 employees will have to pay RM80,000 to test all employees every two weeks, given the cost of RTK-Antigen test kits are at RM40 each.

“In a month, the cost would amount to RM160,000, just for test kits.

“Then there’s the loss of productivity due to the unreasonable disruptions, the stress to logistic operators and not to mention rising anxiety levels among staff who are required to provide samples every two weeks.

“We are also perplexed by the requirement to test all employees contrary to the policy to test symptomatic employees only and to exclude asymptomatic individuals,” he said.

He also slammed the latest SOPs as they “will just kill more businesses”.

“Businesses are just opening up with no jobs yet in hand while having to deal with collection and cash-flow issues.

“Adding additional costs and stress to business at a time when businesses cannot even pay salaries and overheads is too much. This is not right,” he said.

In addition, he said SOPs and related policies must be consistent with government objectives and business-friendly.

“We urge policymakers to place themselves in business operators’ position before making additional cost decisions.

“Let’s all be practical and safe, and not just introduce policies that do not affect policymakers, but are harmful to businesses,” he added. – The Vibes, August 26, 2021