



Industries Must Do More to Contain Spread of Covid-19 Pandemic, Can't Survive if Full Lockdown Again

Kuala Lumpur, January 25, 2021 – The industry is deeply alarmed by the warning of the Ministry of Health that the country's health system is at a breaking point due to the overwhelming active COVID-19 cases. We are equally concerned of the latest updates that there are currently 318 active COVID-19 clusters of which 99 clusters or about 30% are from the manufacturing sector. The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) strongly believes that it is important for the current infections and clusters to be managed effectively so that the chain of infections be broken swiftly as we, the business sector cannot withstand another round of total lockdown similar to the Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020.

A second full lockdown will lead to irreparable damage to the business sector and economy with devastating impact on business survival and job security. It is therefore very crucial for the industry to give its fullest cooperation and play its part by taking the additional proactive and preventive measures to tighten the existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at the workplace and living quarters of employees. FMM has issued another reminder to all its members on the additional measures that must be taken to protect our workforce and contain the spread of infections:

- i. Workers hostels and housing have been identified as a breeding ground for COVID-19 infection and there is an urgent need for employers to provide greater attention to the living conditions for all workers and ensure they comply with strict SOPs including the requirement for physical distancing in the living environment. This would also include imposing the same requirements on the living conditions of sub-contract workers.
- ii. Comply with the Government's directive for all foreign workers to be Covid-19 screened and endeavour to get this concluded soonest possible by the set deadline. Mass testing has also proven to be a very effective approach to pick up positive cases and trigger the necessary protocols that would ensure swift action and minimal disruption to operations.
- iii. The capacity of the vehicles or busses to ferry workers to be kept at 50% or below to ensure physical distancing is maintained in these vehicles while transporting workers including all other SOPs and precautional measures.
- iv. Appoint senior management members of the company to oversee that the SOPs are strictly complied while at the workplace (including rest and meal times), at the workers' accommodation and during transportation of workers.
- v. Isolate suspected or positive COVID-19 cases at a dedicated point similar to self-quarantine away from other workers and immediately notify the nearest state or district health departments.
- vi. Advocate a "safe work bubble" for employees by monitoring and limiting employees' movements to the minimum and on need basis only. Daily travel should be limited to the commute from home to workplace and back.

At the same time, the industry has also written to highlight some of the challenges and obstacles faced by the industry and FMM has appealed for the continued support of the Government to facilitate all employers as they endeavour to comply with some of the requirements and directives that have a direct impact on their adherence to specific SOPs and preventive measures namely compliance to the Act 446 on accommodation for employees and the mandatory testing of all foreign workers throughout the country. On the Act 446, the major obstacle faced currently are the lack of hostels and centralised living

quarters; additional accommodation space and most critical is the lack of facilitation of approvals by local authorities which is a critical element to compliance. Particularly on the mandatory testing of all foreign workers, FMM has appealed for the immediate action from the Government on the following:

- i. Agree to subsidise the cost of the RTK-antigen test kits so that employers in all the states under the MCO can quickly arrange to conclude the mandatory screening by the deadline;
- ii. Clinics and hospitals to strictly adhere to the gazetted cost of the RTK-antigen / RT-PCR tests for all including foreigners or when bulk tests are done, consider appropriate discounts for the service cost / test costs which would be borne by employers; and
- iii. Ensure sufficient test facilities and labs to cope with the volume of tests that would be carried out during this period and for timely release of test results.

At this juncture, also very critical for business continuity and economic growth would be a transparent and comprehensive national COVID-19 vaccination programme for the entire population which is crucial at not only preserving public health and lives but also for economic recovery. An early announcement of the national vaccination programme and the prioritised groups are critical towards the industries' business continuity plans. It must be recognised that that as long as the pandemic pervades, the growth and investments by the private sector will remain subdued and the economic recovery will continue to be sluggish.

Once again FMM has continued to remind its members that breaking this chain of infections is of utmost importance and must be a concerted effort of both the public and private sector. We are all front liners in this fight against COVID-19 and each and every one of us must have the collective responsibility to support the Government's continued efforts in flattening the COVID-19 curve while ensuring the economic wellbeing of the *rakyat* and the nation.



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FMM Advocates Transparency, Integrity and No Corruption

About FMM

The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) has been the voice of the Malaysian manufacturing sector since 1968. Representing over 10,000 member companies (3,000 direct and 7,000 indirect) from the manufacturing supply chain, FMM is actively engaged with government and its key agencies at Federal, State and local levels. FMM is also well-linked with international organisations, Malaysian businesses and civil society. Apart from benefitting from FMM's advocacy, FMM members enjoy value-add services, including training, business networking and trade opportunities as well as regular information updates.

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