

MEDIA RELEASE

Manpower shortage hindering recovery efforts

Petaling Jaya: Though the government's decision to open up the economy provided employers the motivation for recovery, the shortage of manpower in sectors shunned by locals was hindering such efforts.

MEF President Dato' Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. expressed serious concern on the issue of manpower shortage especially for critical sectors other than the plantation, construction, manufacturing sectors – such as the food sector and large retailers.

"MEF supports the opening up the economy and employers are eager to recover their businesses, but those in these sectors are frustrated at the scarcity of available workers," he said.

"Despite the higher unemployment rate especially among the youths, employers in these sectors are faced with extreme difficulties to get the required manpower to run their business.

"Industries in these sectors continue to suffer due to manpower shortage.

"A good example is the food business. Even though they are allowed to operate, most of these eateries continue to only offer take-away for this reason.

"The eateries are suffering because they are not able to get the workers to do the necessary work."

He said the government must recognise that not all businesses could be performed digitally as most of these sectors still depend on manual labour.

"We support efforts to reduce dependence on foreign workers in certain sectors, but the government should address this complex matter on sectoral basis as many sectors also depend of foreign labour apart from the plantation and construction sectors.

"We acknowledge that the government may be facing complexities in working out the G-to-G arrangements to source for foreign workers, however the fact remains that the economy cannot improve if all the elements to run it are not in place.

"Malaysia cannot perform at optimum level if we only hope to depend on domestic workers, and if this situation continues, other issues will arise.

"We hope for greater focus and effort by the government to resolve this matter.

"There has to be a balance between doing business and the supply of foreign workers.

"We propose that rather than impose a blanket rule to disallow foreign workers, the government should consider allowing foreign workers in terms of sector by sector, and perhaps should begin with the eateries."

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