

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## MEF APPEALS FOR SPECIAL APPROVAL TO EMPLOY REFUGEES AND UNDOCUMENTED FOREIGN WORKERS TO EASE ACUTE SHORTAGE OF LABOUR

Petaling Jaya : Employers are facing acute shortage of foreign workers due to the freeze of the recruitment of new foreign workers imposed during the 2020 and 2021 Covid 19 pandemic period and closure of Malaysian borders. Since mid-February 2022 the government lifted the freeze on recruitment of foreign workers. However, the application and approval processes are still not running smoothly and no new foreign workers are brought in thus far.

MEF President Dato' Dr. Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. stated that "MEF is very concerned that after close to three months of opening up of the applications to recruit new foreign workers no new foreign workers are brought in yet. Despite all the efforts taken by employers to resolve shortage of workers, especially foreign workers the shortage is not resolved thus far."

Dato' Dr. Syed Hussain adds that "MEF is appealing to the government to allow other forms of labour to cover the shortage of foreign workers until they finally arrive in Malaysia. The plantation industry depends on available harvesters to harvest the crops at the right time failing which the fruits will turn bad and will be considered as total loss which will not be able to be recovered. Any delay in harvesting, the crop will lead to total loss. The plantation industry lost more than RM 30 bil due to shortage of harvesters. Billions were lost as the ripe fruits were not harvested to convert to palm oil due to shortage of workers. Similar shortage is being experienced by other sectors such as manufacturing, tourism retail services and construction."

"MEF is proposing for special approval to be given to use the labour available within the country now. We can source for the required labour from among the refugees, undocumented foreign workers here and prisoners on minor crimes. These people with the special approval of the government can be deployed immediately to fill up the acute shortage until the new foreign workers

finally arrive. It was reported that there are about 168,000 refugees holding UNHCR card and more than 60% of them are potentially employable.”

“The Malaysian Business community had spent a lot of time and resources to fill up the shortages but to no avail. With the higher world demand for Malaysian products and services every second delay is translated to loss of revenue to businesses and government. Employers need the new workers urgently to assist in their recovery efforts and put their businesses on the right path. We need to look for quick solutions as short gap measures until all issues on foreign labour recruitment are resolved.”

For further information, please contact the MEF Secretariat at 03-7955-7778 or fax 03-7955-9008 or email [mef-hq@mef.org.my](mailto:mef-hq@mef.org.my).

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