



# Developers raring to resume work

➤ Association laments shortage of facilities to handle requirement for screening of foreign labour

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**PETALING JAYA:** Developers are eager to begin work at construction sites again as many are held to deadlines agreed upon before the movement control order (MCO). Overhead costs are also piling up each day work is delayed.

However, a bottleneck in the infrastructure needed for mandatory Covid-19 tests for foreign workers is delaying efforts to continue development.

On Monday, Senior Minister (Defence) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said of 6,000 construction projects checked by the Construction Industry Development Board, over 4,000 had opted to remain closed.

From the remaining sites, 900 were found to be running and complying with Health Ministry standard operating procedures (SOP), while 224 were non-compliant. On May 25, a cluster of 44 Covid-19 cases was found at a construction site in Kuala Lumpur.

Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) Malaysia president Datuk Soam Heng Choon said although public health took precedence, solutions were needed to get the wheels turning.

"Most developers, especially the average-sized and larger developers, want to start work again," he told *theSun*.

"We have overheads and our responsibility to our clients to meet our agreed-upon deadlines. But many construction projects

cannot start because of the mandatory Covid-19 tests needed before our foreign workers can come back to work.

"We agree with the Health Ministry guidelines, but the limited testing facilities is causing delays.

"We have a few hundred thousand foreign

workers. However, only a few labs have been commissioned to test them."

Soam said it could take up to two weeks to get an appointment for the test, and then a further two weeks to get the test results.

"The Health Ministry has been made aware of our problems, and we hope to receive a response soon," he added.

"There may be some problems with imported materials, such as elevators and lifts from China, due to various international restrictions. However, with China easing up on their manufacturers, I don't think this will be a problem for much longer.

"Locally, manufacturers are waiting for construction projects to begin again as they can't run their factories at full capacity until then.

"If they manufacture their products but there is no uptake from the developers and construction companies, the manufacturers will then face storage issues," he said, adding that projects need to be given the go-ahead urgently as that would help boost the economy.

## PRIMARY CONCERNS OF MALAYSIANS

