

19 JAN, 2021

Employers ask for more and speedier Covid-19 testing

The Star, Malaysia



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PETALING JAYA: Employers are calling on the government to appoint more panel clinics and hospitals to conduct Covid-19 tests to avoid overcrowding at medical facilities.

More employers are sending their staff for tests, in addition to the mandatory screening of foreign workers, since there has been an increase in workplace clusters.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said health facilities are more or less overwhelmed with having to test both foreign and now local workers as well.

"And the overcrowding at these facilities will be worse once the vaccination programme starts," he said here yesterday.

Shamsuddin added that it would



Cause for concern: The groups believe the high number of cases lately warrants more testing of workers, both local and foreign.
— Bernama

take several months to completely screen all 1.7 million foreign workers, going by the current rate of testing.

"Even if we manage to do all the testing on legal foreign workers at the full capacity of 54,000 tests per day, it will take at least 31 days to

complete," he said.

Other than the expected overcrowding at health facilities, Shamsuddin said the screening of all local workers is costly and should be based on need and the risk situation.

SME Association of Malaysia

president Datuk Michael Kang said the high number of cases warrants more testing of workers, both local and foreign.

More health facilities should be roped in by the government to speed up the process, he said.

"Some of our members have given feedback that the infection rate among their local staff was higher than that of their foreign workers. They also said they had to book appointments and wait for screening.

"It is necessary to appoint more panels to let more people get tested sooner without having to wait in order to control the spread of the virus," he said.

Kang also called on the government to allow all workers who contribute to the Social Security Organisation (Socso) to claim for the Covid-19 screening fee.

Federation of Malaysian Manu-

facturers (FMM) president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said as long as a worker is a contributor and regardless whether they are local or foreign, the cost of Covid-19 test kits should be covered by Socso.

Meanwhile, Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) Malaysia president Datuk Soam Heng Choon said employers should try and plan in advance if they had to get their workers tested.

He said employers should do their part by checking with the panel clinics or hospitals.

"I have heard of complaints of employees having to wait to get tested and there are also praises that the process was smooth.

"I think it is a matter of making the necessary adjustment and inquiries before calling up and arranging for the tests," he said, adding that Rehda members have been able to get their workers tested.