

Reports by CLARISSA CHUNG, JUNAID IBRAHIM and AIN NADJWA

# Firms need time to switch to WFH

## Some companies still confused by directive, call for more clear-cut rules

**PETALING JAYA:** Offices in conditional movement control order (MCO) zones are emptying out, as many firms align with the government's Work-From-Home (WFH) policy.

However, employers and business groups also say that while companies are moving towards WFH, they need time to make the necessary arrangements.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan noted that many companies were implementing a WFH policy, although some found the process "messy".

"It is not business as usual, as many companies have chosen to work from home. The process has been messy.

"The instructions, communication and media statements released by the authorities are confusing, and there seems to be different understanding of the policy," he said.

He cited a complaint he received of a worker who was not in a managerial or supervisory role but was told to return home when stopped at a roadblock.

"The authorities had asked for a police permit. When the worker said an employer's letter was sufficient, she was told to return home," he said.

He added that some businesses were also frantically trying to decide who made up the 10% of the managerial staff allowed on-site.

Smaller firms, he said, with a workforce of fewer than 10 were also trying to compute what constituted 10% of the managerial staff.

Shamsuddin suggests that the government specify the industries that are registered under the International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti) to eliminate any confusion or



ambiguity.

The Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia (Huazong) urged the government and the relevant authorities to quickly come out with clearer and unified guidelines on the WFH order to avoid public confusion.

While acknowledging the government's good intention of introducing WFH in places like Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Sabah, Putrajaya and Labuan to better contain the pandemic, Huazong president Tan Sri T.C. Goh observed that the order had triggered confusion, inconvenience and anxiety.

He said this was largely due to inadequate ground reality check and feedback, which inevitably led to flaws in the planning and execution of the order.

SME Association of Malaysia pres-

ident Datuk Michael Kang said companies would need a couple of days to fully transition to the WFH policy.

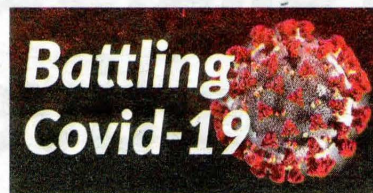
"After the government made the announcements on Wednesday, we know now that only those industries under Miti are affected by this directive.

"However, there are still a number of SMEs which are affected by the policy, so they will still need one or two days to clarify with the ministry and understand it in detail," he said.

While it is normal to have teething problems, Kang believes that work will run more smoothly as the government clarifies the nitty-gritty.

The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) however expressed

**Keeping safe and away:** It is all quiet in the Nestle office in Petaling Jaya, save for a few security guards, as the WFH directive takes effect until the end of the conditional MCO. Where possible, employees are working from home, and will stay connected via virtual platforms in order to perform their work duties.



appears to be that the health and lives of managers and supervisors are more important than that of the other staff.

"If it is aimed at reducing the chances of Covid-19 spreading, there should not be this form of discrimination in the first place," he said in a statement yesterday.

Meanwhile, some government entities have also changed the working hours of their service counters during the conditional MCO.

The Inland Revenue Board (LHDN) said branch counters in conditional MCO areas would only be open for the first half of the day.

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has closed its offices in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Labuan until further notice.

On Oct 20, Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said nearly one million workers from the private and public sectors must work from home starting Oct 22.

He added that all those who have to come to office would be required to undergo swab tests for Covid-19.

A day later, the government cleared up public confusion over the policy by announcing that the directive only applied to civil servants and industries registered under the International Trade and Industry Ministry.

Ismail Sabri also said only foreign construction workers, security guards and those with symptoms need to take swab tests, while the rest are only encouraged to do so.



dissatisfaction over the policy, saying that the ruling for only 10% of those in managerial roles to work on-site was a "form of discrimination".

Its Selangor and Federal Territories division secretary Mohd Faisal Husin said while he could understand the rationale for the WFH rule, he claimed that the discrimination practised by the government was "unacceptable".

"The net effect of this policy