

Headline	Reducing workforce will affect projects' progress, govt told		
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NEW S.O.P

Reducing workforce will affect projects' progress, govt told

KUALA LUMPUR: Contractors associations have urged the government to seek feedback from them on the new standard operating procedures (SOP) which allow certain industries to operate during the third phase of the Movement Control Order (MCO).

Despite agreeing to the move to reopen certain sectors, they said there were outstanding issues that needed to be resolved before operations could resume smoothly.

Penang Master Builders and Building Materials Dealers Association adviser Datuk Lim Kai Seng said the SOP requiring companies to reduce the number of manpower by 50 per cent would limit the progress of a development project.

"Construction is tricky as we need the majority of workers on board. We need around 100 to 200 workers, depending on day to day workload.

"Some certified workers must be on standby if anything were to happen as well.

"This is our dilemma now as we are faced with another project extension under the MCO. Having the number of workers halved will drag the progress.

"We only want the government, through the International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti), to gather feedback from contractors and industry experts to address the issues," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Malaysian Bumiputera Contractors Association (PKBM)

president Datuk Azman Yusoff suggested that the government review and consider exempting contractors from liquidated and ascertained damages (LAD).

"Referring to Miti's recent release on the operational clearance, PKBM is confident that the contractors involved will adhere to the conditions set by the Works Ministry and the Construction Industry Development Board of Malaysia, particularly with regard to the 50 per cent reduction in the number of employees.

"However, compliance will result in the project's performance to be slower, which will lead to the delay of completion and the contractor will be subjected to the LAD."

Azman was confident that the

contractors involved were prepared to fully comply with the conditions requiring employees to undergo Covid-19 screening to ensure the workplace was free from the virus.

Class F Bumiputera Contractors Association president Tukiman Radion also shared the same sentiment.

However, he said, to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the government should have maintained the original SOP, which only allowed limited sectors to operate.

"The previous SOP was effective enough to prevent any new cluster from emerging.

"It is good that the government is making sure that select industries are allowed to operate. But

for contractors who do not have new projects, perhaps they should be allowed to claim assistance from the government by taking up loans to enable them to weather this difficult period."

On Thursday, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali announced a list of SOP for select industries to adhere to throughout the third phase of the MCO, which was due to end on April 28.

The SOP include requiring workers to undergo Covid-19 screening.

Construction companies must also provide transportation for workers, practise social distancing and sanitise all vehicles used by them.