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BACK ON TRACK

THE construction sector is recovering thanks to stimulus packages and the resumption of economic activities. Only 23 per cent of sites inspected by CIDB have yet to resume operations due to labour shortage.

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PIC BY IROHANIS SHUKRI

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CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD MALAYSIA

80PC OF CONSTRUCTION SITES RESTART WORK

CIDB says reopening of most sectors, stimulus packages mitigated industry's losses

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NEARLY 80 per cent of construction sites inspected by the Construction Industry Development Board Malaysia (CIDB) have resumed their operations up to last week following the implementation of the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO).

CIDB chief executive Datuk Ahmad 'Asri Abdul Hamid said the RMCO, which saw the reopening of almost all economic sectors, coupled with the four stimulus packages launched by the government to cushion the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, had mitigated losses suffered by the construction industry.

He said 84 per cent of construction sites inspected by CIDB were initially unable to resume operations during the first week of the Conditional MCO, which came into force on May 4.

"Of the total, 35 per cent of the construction sites were facing problems with cash flow, while 21 per cent had difficulties in complying with the standard operating procedures (SOP), especially the requirements of having their migrant workforce undergo Covid-19 screening, which, to them, was costly and time-consuming.

"However, these problems have been resolved after the government rolled out the stimulus packages, including the RM250 billion Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package and the short-term Economic Recovery Plan (Penjana) worth RM35 billion.

"According to the weekly inspection conducted by CIDB, only 23 per cent of the construction sites have yet to reopen as the RMCO entered its third week last week," he said yesterday.

The encouraging development, he said, reflected the success of the measures introduced under the RMCO, which aimed to revive the economy.

Among the measures intro-



A worker at a Mass Rail Transit construction site in Kuala Lumpur last year. FILE PIC

duced by the government to ease the burden of industry players included subsidising Covid-19 screening of workers, who are Social Security Organisation (Socso) contributors.

The government had introduced Covid-19 screening under the Socso Prihatin Screening Programme, which prioritised foreign workers in the construction and security sectors in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

Ahmad 'Asri said construction sites that had yet to reopen were suffering from labour shortage since they had been relying on migrant workers for operations prior to the MCO.

"When the MCO was implemented on March 18, many foreign workers had returned to their countries and were not allowed to re-enter Malaysia.

"Apart from that, many of them were illegal immigrants.

"They did not come forward for the (Covid-19) screening and this prevented them from returning to work."

The sector, he said, recorded losses of about RM11 billion after non-essential sectors, including the construction industry, were closed during the first phase of the MCO.

The losses were subsequently reduced by RM4.8 billion to RM6.2 billion when the government allowed the resumption of

13 construction project categories.

"Based on paper, the construction sector should not have suffered any more losses since many sectors have resumed operations under the Recovery MCO," he said.

Earlier, Ahmad 'Asri accompanied Works Ministry secretary-general Datuk Dr Syed Omar Sharifuddin Syed Ikhsan to check on the Socso Prihatin Screening Programme for migrant construction workers at the CIDB Convention Centre here.

They were briefed by Socso on the screening programme, which was attended by 700 construction workers from 59 companies.

Senior Minister (Security Cluster) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said 2,750 construction sites, which have resumed operations up to yesterday, complied with the SOP.

Ismail Sabri said 495 construction sites were issued with reminders by CIDB for failing to fully comply with the SOP.

Page 1 pic: Medical frontliners taking swab samples from foreign construction workers for Covid-19 testing during the Socso Prihatin Screening Programme at the CIDB Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.



Datuk Ahmad 'Asri Abdul Hamid