

Headline	Group wants govt to share cost of testing for foreign workers		
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Group wants govt to share cost of testing for foreign workers

IPOH: The Perak Coffeeshop Association is requesting for the government to share at least half the cost of Covid-19 testing for foreign workers.

Association chairman Ooi Beng Yeaw said with businesses having dropped between 50% and 70% since the movement control order (MCO) was enforced in March, most coffeeshops are finding it hard to pay for the tests.

"Even if a coffeeshop has two foreign workers, forking out about RM900 for each person for the test, is just too much to bear.

"Our members are not even breaking even and to fork out thousands just does not make sense," he said, adding that they also have to pay rent, utilities, licensing fees and so on.

Ooi was commenting on Senior



Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's statement that all foreign workers must go through Covid-19 tests, with employers bearing the cost.

Ooi also believes that many coffeeshops will not open for dining-in due to the lack of manpower to

adhere to the required standard operating procedure (SOP).

"Only about 40% of coffeeshops in Ipoh are open. Even if dine-in is allowed in Perak, I don't think many of them will want to offer dining-in as an option.

"Just the cost to get the necessary equipment for the SOP is not cheap. Imagine forking out more for the Covid-19 tests," he said, adding that coffeeshops catering to takeaways are also not making a profit.

Coffeeshop owner Alex Wong, 40, said he felt that the government and the association at federal level should negotiate the cost for the tests.

"The government must be reasonable, provide some sort of discounts, and maybe allow employers to pay in installments.

"We are just not making enough

to fork out additional money for equipment or tests.

"Not to mention, most of us are confused with different rulings every now and then," he added.

Meanwhile, Real Estate and Housing Developers Association (Rehda) Perak chairman Tony Khoo Boon Chuan said the Covid-19 testing for foreign workers was impractical.

"Let's say the foreign workers went for the test today, what guarantees are there that they won't get infected the next day?"

"The test result will only be known after two to three days. If they get infected, what then?" he asked.

"If it's to pay for the vaccine, I think most companies will have no issue forking out the money," he said.

Khoo added that construction sites should have their own SOP to check their workers before allowing them to start work.

"If a worker has Covid-19, then the site should go into lockdown accordingly.

"I don't think the MCO will end any time soon, and until a vaccine is found, it will be prolonged.

"We will just have to live with Covid-19 like how we deal with dengue," said Khoo, who added that the government should put a cap on the cost for disinfection at work sites.

"I heard that the cost for disinfecting a premises can be over RM100,000, and a lot of companies are worried about this.

"We are all tax-paying businesses and the cost should be reasonable," he added.