

TOP GLOVE: EXERCISE TO IMPROVE WORKERS' LIVING CONDITIONS TO BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER

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KUALA LUMPUR (Nov 28): Top Glove Corp Bhd said an exercise to further improve the company's workers' living conditions, which began in July, is expected to be completed by December to meet requirements under the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 (Act 446).

In a statement yesterday, Top Glove said efforts by the rubber glove manufacturer to source for more accommodations and improve existing worker accommodations are ongoing.

"With regard to a visit by the Department of Labour of Peninsular Malaysia to our Ipoh factory workers' accommodations yesterday (Thursday), we wish to inform that Top Glove will be extending its fullest cooperation to the relevant authorities.

"Top Glove wishes to clarify that we are in the process of improving the living quarters of our workers to meet the requirements under the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 (Act

446). Part of our efforts towards this for our workers in Ipoh is the rental of eight units of new shophot hostels.

"Six have been occupied, while another two are in the process of being set up for workers. The exercise to move workers in is ongoing and expected to be completed by early December," Top Glove said.

The company said it understands that its workforce is its greatest asset and that the rubber glove manufacturer is committed to working closely with the relevant authorities to make the necessary improvements towards ensuring safety and well-being of its workers.

Glove maker's statement follows enforcement of act

Top Glove's statement yesterday followed the Malaysian government's move to enforce the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act since Thursday.

News reports quoted Senior Minister (Security Cluster) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob as saying on Wednesday that employers who flout the Ministry of Human Resources' (MoHR) regulations will be fined RM50,000 per worker.

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) said employers need more time to comply with the act.

On Thursday, the MEF said in a statement that the MoHR's decision to fully enforce the act could drive many employers out of business, which would then lead to increased job losses.

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said in the statement: "While the MEF recognises the need to improve the accommodation standards for foreign workers, we seek compassion of the government to take into account the current situation, and not penalise employers for failing to comply with the act.

"In complying with the act, employers are required to abide by such things [like] the space requirement and minimum thickness of mattress. For example, 1,500 sq ft of space could only accommodate a maximum of six foreign workers, and we know that many Malaysians are living in spaces much smaller than this.

"Employers who fail to comply with the act would be fined RM50,000 per foreign worker. At the same time, many employers are relying on the Wage Subsidy Programme and other government support to survive the pandemic," Syed Hussain said.

Concerns voiced over impact of act on businesses

The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) also voiced its concerns about the impact of the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 on businesses.

On Sept 1, 2020, Bernama, quoting FMM president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai's statement then, reported that the manufacturing industry was appealing to the MoHR to give companies another 12 months to undertake extensive adjustments according to the requirements under the act.

It was reported, according to Soh, that the RM50,000 fine for each offence in light of the current weak economic condition is too drastic and would severely hamper business revival initiatives of most industries.

"The FMM suggests that the next 12 months be used to continually educate the industry and issue a notice of non-compliance for improvements [to be made] by the industry in conformity to the provisions

of the law.

"There should also be a requirement for firm commitment by the industry to the action plan towards compliance within a specified time frame appropriate for relevant areas of non-compliance," he said.

Latest updates on the FMM's website showed that group yesterday reminded its members, in a Covid-19 movement control order (MCO) advisory, to continue to be diligent and vigilant in adhering to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and advisories issued by the government for the workplace.

The FMM also told its members to remind their respective employees to do the same outside the workplace.

"We also wish to remind [our] members to take the necessary steps towards compliance with the requirements under Act 446," the FMM said.