PETALING JAYA: At least 30 employees at an IT services company in Cyberjaya have been forced to work from home until further notice after a staff came under suspicion of having contracted the novel coronavirus (Covid-19).

It is understood the directive from the management was given to the staff on Tuesday in an attempt to prevent the virus from spreading.

An employee of the company, who requested anonymity, said a team from the first floor of the five-storey building had to be evacuated after it was found that an employee might have been infected with the Covid-19.

“We have been asked to work from home. It is a good move to ease the heightened panic among the staff here,” the employee told theSun yesterday.

However, she said the management has not decided how long the affected employees would be barred from the office.

The male employee suspected to be infected eventually tested negative for Covid-19, but positive for H1N1 as well as Influenza A and B. He is believed to have contracted the viruses during the Chinese New Year holidays. Members of his family have also been placed under quarantine.

Workers on the other floors of the building have expressed concern but they have not been ordered to work from home.

In an immediate response, Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said it was a reasonable move to prevent the virus from spreading.

“Employees should be allowed to work from home when any of their colleagues have contracted the Covid-19,” he said.

“I think all employers should adopt the practice. Apart from those who work outside the office, employees should be sent home in such situations.”

“Employees should not be allowed to come to work because of the risk of them getting the virus,” he said, adding that in such situations, companies should not deduct the wages of those who are under quarantine.

He pointed out that it is very critical for a company to take swift action if any of its employees is suspected to have contracted the virus.

“This concerns the well-being of all the employees.”
Employers urged to be flexible

Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) secretary-general J. Solomon said there is an urgent need for employers and trade unions to find amicable solutions to address the situation when it arises.

“Employers must be flexible,” he said. “MTUC has proposed several steps that can be taken by employers in such situations.”

He also urged employers to consider some flexibility, including allowing employees to work from home.

“They should also consider limiting business travel to affected areas at this time and arrange for video conferencing, for example, during the duration of the threat and heightened risk.”

He advised employers to call for emergency meetings with trade unions when such a situation arises to discuss ways to handle the epidemic.

“All policies should be enforced in a uniform and consistent way, and employers should not send employees to China, or any other location affected by the virus, unless absolutely necessary,” he said. “The Covid-19 epidemic has to be quickly addressed. Any delay in reporting and taking action because of business interests will only make the situation worse.”