PETALING JAYA: Most employers are confident of meeting the March 31 deadline to complete Covid-19 screening for foreign workers.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the majority of employers across the country would be able to get the job done by then.
“From the feedback we received from members and after liaising with the government, we are close to the target,” he said when contacted yesterday.

On Covid-19 vaccinations being extended to all foreign workers, he said the move was vital to revitalise the national economy.

“Without vaccinating foreign workers, it would be hard for us to achieve herd immunity.

“Employers will continue to play their role to support the government’s programme,” he added.

On the issue of providing proper housing to workers, Shamsuddin welcomed the government’s “Safe Work Bubble” initiative that would allow close contacts of Covid-19 patients to continue working until declared free of the virus.

He added that this would help reduce disruptions to company operations.

“Previously, a company would have to shut down temporarily but now they have a proper procedure in place to ensure continuity in their business operations,” he said.

Companies which take part in the initiative will be eligible for a RM50,000 tax exemption, with firms able to register for the initiative from April 1.

Malaysian Muslim Restaurant Owners Association (Presma) president Datuk Jawahar Ali Taib Khan said its members were on track when it came to keeping to the approaching deadline.

He said restaurant workers had been regularly tested in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, adding that almost all restaurant workers had done so.

“We have been cooperating with the relevant authorities to help contain the Covid-19 outbreak,” Jawahar said.

Presma has over 4,000 members.

Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia SMEs committee chairman Koong Lin Loong called for a further extension, saying the screening of foreign workers was still ongoing.

“There may be a little bit of delay for smaller businesses as they are facing work schedule issues and cashflow problems.

“It would be better if the government can give a suitable extension,” he said.

Koong also suggested the government find ways to help screen undocumented foreign workers.

“We want them to be included in the screening programme.

“The government needs to use a holistic approach in dealing with the issue,” he added.