Some 150,000 foreign workers yet to be tested

by NUR HAZIQAH A MALEK / pic by TMR FILE

MEF hopes the ruling on non-renewal of foreign workers’ passes will not be implemented and that the focus shifts to immunisation instead

THEM are more than 150,000 foreign workers yet to be screened for Covid-19, despite the Ministry of Human Resources’ March 31 deadline, according to the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

MEF CEO Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said as of March 27, nearly 1.5 million legal workers have been screened for the virus.

“Employers do need a bit of time to get the remaining over 150,000 legal foreign workers to be screened,” he told The Malaysian Reserve (TMR).

He said the federation hopes that the ruling on non-renewal of foreign workers’ passes will not be implemented, especially for the workers who could not get their screening done before the deadline.

“Employers have tried their best to send workers for screening, but logistical difficulties prevented them from getting screened, such as clinics’ capacities.”

TMR had previously reported that the MEF stated it would be impossible to meet the March 31 deadline to have all foreign workers screened due to deficient facilities.

Shamsuddin also stated that the potential subsequent tests that employers have to go through to ensure all workers are Covid-19 negative would be a financial burden to employers as they will have to pay for both the test kit and service fee.

He said it is better to shift the focus from screening to vaccination now.

“We should concentrate more on vaccination as it offers better prevention against Covid-19 infection.”
Further illustrating the financial burden on employers, the federation stated that the lower starting salary for fresh graduates last year was reflective of the devastation caused by the outbreak on the nation’s economy.

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said majority of employers are currently suffering from cashflow constraints and, on top of that, over 32,000 companies closed down in 2020.

"At the moment, some employers are still downsizing and are vigorously implementing multi-skilling and multitasking at the workplace to remain sustainable.

"Many employees have experienced pay cuts and reduced benefits, while employers are dependent on subsidies granted by the government via the Prihatin, Penjana and Pemerkasa initiatives to avoid further retrenching staff."

Additionally, he said employers are also looking at shorter-term employment, hourly pay and outsourcing their non-core activities to remain viable.