

MEF OSH CONFERENCE 2026 CALLS FOR STRONGER ACTION ON WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

Petaling Jaya: MEF today called for stronger and more coordinated efforts by employers, policymakers, and workplace leaders to prioritize mental health and psychosocial risk management as a critical component of workplace safety, productivity, and sustainability.

Held under the theme:

“Breaking the Silence: Mental Health Matters at Work”

The MEF OSH Conference 2026 brought together employers, occupational safety and health (OSH) practitioners, policymakers, industry leaders, human resource professionals, and mental health advocates to address emerging psychosocial risks and explore practical strategies for building psychologically safe and resilient workplaces.

Delivering his keynote remarks, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye emphasized that psychosocial hazards must be treated with the same level of seriousness as physical workplace risks.

“A workplace cannot be regarded as truly safe when employees are overwhelmed by unrealistic workloads, exposed to bullying, harassment, or chronic emotional stress. These are not merely ‘soft issues’, they are genuine occupational hazards that can severely impact wellbeing, safety, and productivity.”

Tan Sri Lee highlighted that rising levels of stress, burnout, anxiety, workplace bullying, emotional fatigue, and social isolation are increasingly affecting employees across industries and organizational levels.

Tan Sri Lee further warned of the growing phenomenon of *presenteeism*, where employees are physically present at work but mentally exhausted or emotionally distressed.

“Presenteeism silently erodes productivity, decision-making, morale, and innovation. Mental health is no longer just a welfare issue, it is an economic imperative. When we fail to address psychosocial risks, we risk failing both our workforce and our nation’s economic resilience.”

Tan Sri Lee also stressed the importance of fostering workplace cultures where employees feel psychologically safe to speak openly about mental health concerns without fear of stigma, discrimination, or retaliation.

Meanwhile, MEF President, Datuk Dr. Syed Hussain Syed Husman reaffirmed MEF's commitment to supporting national efforts to strengthen workplace mental health protection and psychosocial risk management.

Datuk Dr. Syed Hussain welcomed the introduction of the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH)'s *Guidelines on Psychosocial Risk Assessment and Management at the Workplace 2024 (PRisMA Guidelines)*, describing it as a timely and important framework to assist employers in systematically identifying, assessing, and managing psychosocial risks.

“The world of work is changing rapidly, and employers are increasingly confronted with psychosocial challenges arising from excessive workloads, burnout, workplace harassment, emotional strain, and blurred work-life boundaries. Employers recognize that safeguarding mental wellbeing is essential not only for employees, but also for organizational sustainability and business performance.”

Citing findings by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Datuk Dr. Syed Hussain noted that psychosocial risks contribute significantly to global economic losses, with cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders linked to workplace stress estimated to account for approximately 1.37% loss of global GDP annually.

He emphasized the need for practical implementation support, particularly for MSMEs.

“Employers, especially MSMEs, require adequate time, practical guidance, awareness, and capacity-building support to progressively adopt psychosocial risk management measures effectively. The objectives must be to build a culture of prevention, empathy, and shared responsibility across all workplaces.”

YBrs. Ir. Ahmad Jailani Bin Mansor, the Deputy Director General of the Occupational Health, Department of Occupational Safety and Health, also underscored the importance of proactive psychosocial risk management in modern workplaces.

“Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing are increasingly becoming critical occupational safety and health priorities. Organizations must move beyond reactive approaches and embed psychosocial risk management into their

governance, leadership, and workplace practices to ensure sustainable and healthy working environments.”

The conference also marked the official launch of two major initiatives aimed at strengthening workplace OSH practices:

1. **OSH Workplace Assessment (OSHWA) Handbook**
2. **MEF–ILO OSH Digital Assessment Tool**

The newly launched **MEF–ILO OSH Digital Assessment Tool** is designed to assist employers in conducting workplace safety and health assessments in a more systematic, practical, and efficient manner through a digital platform. Meanwhile, the **OSH Workplace Assessment (OSHAWA) Handbook** serves as a practical reference to guide organizations in enhancing workplace safety and health management practices.

MEF expressed its appreciation to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), industry experts, partners, and stakeholders for their strong support and collaboration in making the conference and initiatives possible.

The conference concluded with a strong collective call for employers and organizations to move beyond mere compliance and embrace workplace cultures grounded in empathy, dignity, psychological safety, and human sustainability.

“Breaking the silence on mental health at work is not merely a social responsibility, it is a business necessity and a national priority.”

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14th May 2026