

Top Glove: We've learnt our lessons, will improve workers' hostels

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COVID-19 | Top Glove Corporation Bhd said it will build better workers' accommodation that can segregate and limit the movement of employees from the nearby communities.

At a press conference held today, the world's largest rubber glove manufacturer claimed to have learnt its lesson following the Teratai cluster which emerged as the country's largest Covid-19 cluster.

Managing director Lee Kim Meow said the company's future hostels will be built close to the factories and all necessary facilities will be based there.

"We have allocated RM170 million to build new hostels. Moving forward, we will have accommodation next to the new factories that we are going to build. We will have better control and fewer complaints from local residents.

"All the necessary facilities will be placed close to the workers' accommodation for their convenience. For instance, we will have a barbershop, market, ATM machine and a central canteen.

"The idea is to limit the movement of the workers... I think that has taught us a lesson. We need to manage this better and there is room for improvement," he said when asked if the company planned to segregate its workers to prevent infection.

Top Glove even showed the media the layout plan of its factory in Mantin, Negeri Sembilan, claiming it would be the model of how factories and hostels will be built in the future.

As for the existing hostels, Lee said the company will improve the condition of workers' accommodation by renting or buying new hostels to ensure it would comply with the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 by end of December.

Top Glove-linked Teratai cluster has emerged as the country's largest cluster with 5,259 cases as of noon today. The sharp surge of Covid-19 cases among Top Glove workers resulted in the government placing the workers' dormitories in Klang under enhanced movement control order since Nov 17.

While Putrajaya did not lock down Top Glove factories in Klang, all 28 factories were ordered to shut down in stages.

Following this, the Human Resources Ministry opened 19 investigation papers against six companies related to Top Glove following enforcement operations in five states, namely Perak, Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan and Johor.

Under the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act, if found guilty, an employer could be fined a maximum of RM50,000 per worker.

The company's executive director Lim Cheong Guan said Top Glove has yet to receive any update on the investigation by the government.

Lim, however, said his company appealed for the government's assistance with the requirements under the act.

"It was reported that over 90 percent of workers were not provided with accommodation that complied with the act. It is indeed challenging, but will do our best," added Lim.

Meanwhile, Top Glove executive chairperson Lim Wee Chai said seven plants reopened yesterday and the company expected all of its 28 plants to be fully

operational in two to three weeks' time.

"Hopefully, we will see seven factories to reopen while seven more will reopen next week," he said.

As of today, Top Glove claimed that 4,000 of its workers who have recovered from Covid-19 were allowed to return to work.

"They have been discharged, they are healthy and fit to work. They were sent to the hospital for isolation for only five to six days, but in fact, they had no symptom, no fever or illness," added Lim.

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