

# MEF lauds govt decision to simplify foreign worker recruitment process

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KUALA LUMPUR (Jan 6): Malaysian Employee Federation (MEF) hopes that the government will quickly make the process to bring in foreign workers into the country more efficient, following the home ministry’s announcement about its intention to simplify their application process.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail on Thursday (Jan 5) said the government has pledged to shorten the whole process — which includes application, prior approval, medical check-ups and visa application — to less than 30 days, and aims to implement this new policy from Jan 15.

Lauding the government’s decision to cut the processing time down as bold, MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said employers can finally breathe a huge sigh of relief as the shortages in foreign labour that businesses had faced over the last three years will be over.

“MEF hopes that the new policy will be implemented as soon as possible, so that the efforts by employers to recover their businesses will be on track and the nation [will] be on the right momentum for the targeted GDP growth of between 4% and 5% this year,” he said in a statement released by MEF on Friday (Jan 6).

Syed Hussain added that while the federation has always said that single source recruitment centres should be placed under the purview of the human resources ministry, MEF accepted the decision of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Cabinet that the home ministry would take charge of the management of foreign workers.

“In the past, businesses had been assured of [the] KISS approach, i.e. keep it simple and sweet, but it has never worked. MEF hopes that the unity government and the new Cabinet team will work together to ensure employers do not suffer the same consequences,” he said.

Currently, before an application can be made to bring in foreign employees, they must first advertise for workers for 30 days.

With the new simplified approach, they will now only need to put an advertisement up for one day.

Meanwhile, the conditions and procedures for foreign worker quota applications will also be relaxed, while they include continuous efforts to facilitate evaluation of qualifications to employ foreign workers, conditions, quota approval, immigration processes and security screening.

Three-quarters of the approval and application process would be under the home ministry, while the human resources ministry would be responsible for compliance to labour policies, quota eligibility and cooperation with source countries.