

Cleaners shortchanged? MEF says contract workers have a choice

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But DAP's Charles Santiago says some are forced to accept the terms set by private companies.



Bernama pic

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) says there are no issues with offering fixed-term contracts or renewing the contracts of employees, in the wake of claims that several companies have been denying contract cleaners their rights.

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said when it came to such matters, it was up to the individual to decide whether he or she wanted the contract renewed.

“It depends on what was agreed on in the contract. When it comes to fixed-term contracts, it is normal,” he told FMT.

A fixed-term contract is given when a company hires an employee for a specific period of time. In most cases, such contracts are for a year. However, they can be renewed after the term expires, depending on the requirements.

Shamsuddin said those with fixed-term contracts would get the same benefits as normal employees, as stipulated in the Employment Act 1955.

“If they are unhappy, they can report the matter to the Labour Department,” he added.

Yesterday, Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) accused several companies awarded hospital support services contracts of depriving over 50,000 contract cleaners of their rights.

Some of the cleaners were said to have worked for 20 years in hospitals and clinics nationwide.

PSM deputy chairman M Sarasvathy claimed this happened after the five concessionaires awarded the government contracts sub-contracted the work to private companies for two years.

“This led to the companies offering contracts up to six months, a year or two years to the cleaners when such jobs should be permanent.

“But these companies dressed up the jobs as seasonal and offered fixed contracts,” she said, adding that the cleaners were denied annual leave, annual bonuses as well as compensation in the event that they are retrenched, among other benefits.

According to the Employment Act 1955, she said, a contract can only be offered for a certain period and is meant for part-time jobs.

DAP’s Charles Santiago told FMT he believed the cleaners had been ill-treated.

The Klang MP said the workers had nowhere else to go and likely no other skills.

“They are forced to work and accept whatever terms are set by the private company,” he said when contacted.