

Do Malaysians work too much or too little?

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MTUC says they need more holidays, but MEF says they already have it awfully easy.



PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has urged the government to legislate a reduction in the number of working days per year and hours per week, but the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) complains that Malaysian workers already have too many holidays.



J Solomon.

Reacting to news that the human resources ministry is drafting a review of the Employment Act, MTUC secretary-general J Solomon called for the annual leave period to be extended from the current 16 days and the maximum working hours per week to be set at 48.

Speaking to FMT, Solomon also proposed that workers be given paternity leave of one month and maternity leave of 90 days.

But MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan, alleging that Malaysian productivity is low, told FMT the likely cause was the number of off-days given to workers.

“We have too many public holidays and off-days,” he said, “and that affects the country’s competitiveness.

“What the government could do is increase the number of working days. We must take a re-look at some of the leave provisions, such as the annual leave.



Shamsuddin Bardan.

“Also, when the Employment Act was introduced in 1955, employees were encouraged to work six days a week, but now, most companies work five days a week.”

He said Singaporeans were 3.8 times more productive than Malaysians and suggested that the government look at how working hours are managed in the republic.

Shamsuddin also proposed that the government settle on a definition of “wages”, saying the various laws and regulations pertaining to employment each had its own definition, making it difficult to settle disputes between employers and workers.

Solomon said MTUC had long called for a holistic review of the Employment Act and other laws affecting workers, alleging that many of the provisions, especially those inherited from the colonial period, were draconian in character.

He proposed a broadening of the provisions to protect workers from sexual harassment, the inclusion of provisions to protect migrant domestic workers and the setting of lay-off compensation at the minimum of one month’s wage for every year of employment.