

'It must be equal pay for local and foreign workers'

By **MARHALIM ABAS**
and **CECILIA VICTOR**

— mmnews@mmail.com.my —

PETALING JAYA: Never mind foreign workers, there should be no minimum salary set even for locals, said the Malaysian Employers Federation.

Stating the body's opposition to the government's move to impose a minimum wage of RM900 for both locals and foreigners, its president Samsuddin Baradan said: "We do not agree with a minimum wage for workers at both public and private sectors, including foreign workers.

"Instead, we suggest employers and employees discuss the basic salaries. That would be fairer.

"Employers should decide on

wages based on each one's skills and performance. When employers fail to pay what an employee expects, that employee has the option to leave."

On a suggestion such situations could result in unhappy employees, Samsuddin said: "That is not entirely true, as some employers are willing to pay more to keep them."

Security Services Association of Malaysia president Datuk Shaheen Mirza Habib was also not in favour of foreign workers receiving a minimum wage, describing it as way of letting money out of the country and is thus wasteful.

"If foreigners are paid a minimum wage, most of their income get sent home to their families.

"Based on qualification and skills,

Malaysians are ahead and they should be paid accordingly. There should be no comparison."

Asked whether the association was happy with the government setting the RM700 minimum wage for security guards, he said: "We agreed with the decision and came to an understanding and are happy with it.

"But, we are still waiting for the Human Resource Ministry to draft the implementation formula for the RM700 minimum wage to benefit security guards. This resulted in government and private sector clients holding off contract renegotiations because they are waiting for the gazette to be used as a guideline.

"We believe the implementation would be done soon as the govern-

ment reserved RM270 million for the benefit of the security industry."

Association of Foreign Maid Agencies president Alvi Bavutty said: "Let the government have a discussion with us and only then would we comment on the matter."

On Monday, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam said foreign workers may enjoy the same salary scale as local workers if the private sector's minimum wage model was implemented.

Subramaniam said the current wage scale for foreign workers was determined by market forces and expected to continue until the government decided on the minimum wage implementation.

This plan was supported by

Malaysian Trades Union Congress deputy president Syed Shahir Syed Mohamad, who believed foreign workers should be included in the government plan for basic minimum salaries.

He said MTUC was firm in its commitment for the minimum wage in the country to be fixed at RM900 with a cost of living allowance of RM300.

The congress has been campaigning for the minimum wage of RM900 since 2000, stating the absence of a specific provision in the Employment Act 1955 has led to widespread exploitation of workers.

MTUC president Mohd Khalid Atan agreed. "Minimum wages must be applied to all workers, including foreigners."