

10,000 jobless so far

MEF: Situation critical as companies struggle to stay afloat

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 10,000 Malaysians have lost their jobs since Jan 1, according to Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan.

He said more were expected to lose their jobs in the days ahead as companies, particularly in the manufacturing sector, struggled to stay afloat.

In an urgent appeal to the Government yesterday, he said it

was of utmost importance for the second economic stimulus package to be released fast so that companies could know clearly where they stood.

The Government released a RM7bil stimulus package last month and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak promised a second one soon.

Shamsuddin said the economic downturn this time was much worse than the one in 1997 because it was

more widespread globally.

The situation was more critical as almost 600,000 job seekers flooded the local market every year, he added.

Another factor that added to the woes of the jobless was the presence of 1.5 million to two million illegal foreigners vying for the same jobs.

He suggested that the Government, as a long-term measure, repatriate all illegal workers, replace legal foreign workers in stages with

Malaysians, freeze foreign recruitment and give job priority to Malaysians.

In Seremban, Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said employers in the manufacturing sector in the state had been told to reduce their dependence on foreign workers.

"Many foreign workers are untrained. They do not even know how to mix cement and they are paid RM50 per day. I am sure locals can do such jobs," he said.