

# Bosses' costly labour pains

## RM1.57bil spent on maternity leave yearly not likely to contract, says MEF

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysian employers spend about RM1.57 billion annually in providing 60 days of maternity leave, a seminar on gender equality was told.

A study undertaken by the Malaysian Employers Federation showed that each confinement cost about RM7,500. The amount comprised RM3,000 in wages and RM4,500 in overtime allowances.

In his paper on maternity protection, reconciling work and family responsibilities, federation vice-president A. Ramadass said that under existing laws, employers bore this cost for up to five surviving children.

He said the total cost would escalate to RM2bil, if the maternity leave were to be increased to 84 days, as was the case in Singapore.

However, he pointed out that in Singapore, for the first two confinements, the employers paid for the first eight weeks while the additional four weeks were funded by the Government.

For the third and fourth confinements, the Government paid for the full 12-week maternity leave.

The two-day seminar which began yesterday, was organised by the Hu-

man Resources Ministry, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation.

It was attended by about 50 participants from various government agencies, trade unions and non-governmental organisations.

Lactation consultant Nor Kamariah Mohamad Alwi told the seminar that mother's milk provided an incalculable immunity protection and

was a natural way of nurturing the future generation.

She said breastfeeding also provided significant health benefits to the mother.

Nor Kamariah said the World Health Organisation recommended exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and that it be continued up to two years with complementary foods. — Bernama