

Jobless rate kept in check

Improving national economy brings down unemployment figures

By **JOSHUA FOONG**

joshuafoong@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The improving national economy has resulted in a lower unemployment rate with firms not resorting to retrenchments, according to the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

MEF president Datuk Azman Shah Harun said retrenchment figures had been reducing, citing the trend throughout last year with half the 25,064 employees laid off during the first quarter of 2009.

He said economic and employment conditions were certainly showing signs of steady recovery.

"Speedy recovery in the labour market following improvements in both global and domestic economic conditions resulted in a lower unemployment rate of 3.7% ending last year," he said in his speech at the MEF annual general meeting held in a hotel in Subang Jaya yesterday.

Azman, who was re-elected to a third-term as president, said private firms also continued to grant salary increments at a fair rate of 3.4% in 2009, despite the economic slowdown.

He also pledged MEF's readiness to support the Prime Minister's vision of creating a high income and productive society.

»Speedy recovery in the labour market resulted in a lower unemployment rate«

DATUK AZMAN SHAH HARUN

"We will continue to press for wage reform in the private sector, taking cognisance of company performance and employee contribution to productivity growth," he said.

MEF secretary Datuk Thavalingam Thavarajah, who was re-elected to the MEF committee with the second highest votes, commended Azman for his leadership, saying his fresh mandate augured well for the body.

"Azman has also been made president-elect of the International Organisation of Employers, representing 140 countries around the world.

"This will enable Malaysia to be a voice in shaping employment policies on a global front," he added.