

MEF: Painful but short-term pinch for employers

PETALING JAYA: The construction sector will be feeling a painful but necessary short-term pinch following the upcoming nationwide crackdown to flush out illegal immigrants, said the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

Aside from the construction sector, MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said, the plantation sector – especially in Sabah and Sarawak – would also be hit by the sudden shortage of workers that the major operation was expected to create.

Established companies were not known to hire illegals but these were

employed by some sub-contractors and suppliers, or work informally as odd-job or day labourers, he said.

“Some companies in the construction and plantation sectors may see some difficulty in continuing their operations but this crackdown is necessary because there is no reason for these people to be here, so in the long term, this is positive,” he said.

During the previous operation to nab illegal immigrants nationwide, which was carried out in September last year, the Immigration Department estimated that there were about 480,000 illegal immi-

grants in the country.

Shamsuddin explained that one positive impact of a crackdown is that it would help to ensure that all the foreigners in Malaysia are legal.

SMI Association Malaysia president Teh Kee Sin said the crackdown could cause many industries to come to a standstill due to a lack of workers, and this would affect the economy.

He said the country required a workforce of 16 million but it could only muster 13 million workers, with the remaining jobs taken up by foreigners, of which up to one million could be illegal.

“Who will fill these vacancies?” Teh asked.

He said the foreigners were mostly doing the “dirty and dangerous” jobs that Malaysians shunned.

Teh said problems in the 6P programme caused some foreigners to miss the deadline to register due to a delay in the issuing of passports from the respective embassies and consulates.

“The Government should conduct a thorough study, understand the impact and find a workable solution.

“We will not compromise on illegal workers but proper planning has to be done,” he said.