

MEF: Plan for bosses of illegals not workable

PETALING JAYA: The Government's rehiring programme to allow companies to go online to obtain valid work permits for their illegal workers is not feasible said the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

MEF executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said private sector employers will not admit to having hired illegal workers in the first place.

He pointed out that such an admission would open employers to liabilities, including claims from these workers, besides being blacklisted by the Government.

"We don't agree with this," he said when contacted.

Instead, MEF will propose to the Government to allow these workers to register online but only be issued work permits after they obtain jobs.

Shamsuddin said the Government should help unsuccessful applicants leave the country.

On Friday, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi announced that employers can complete the documentation of their illegal foreign workers online from Feb 15.

Dr Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said there were an estimated two million illegal workers and employers had asked for them to be allowed to continue working here.

Malaysia Trade Union Congress labour advocate Peter Kandiah said illegal foreign workers are exploited and legalising them was commendable.

"Its a good thing because it will allow these workers to get fair wages," he said.

He said like it or not, Malaysia was reliant on these workers for jobs which locals were reluctant to do.

Asli Center for Public Policy Studies chairman Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam said the move to legalise illegal foreign workers cannot be more than an interim measure.

He agreed there was a genuine demand for them and said, "they are already here. We have to accept that reality". But he said there cannot be a long term dependence at the expense of local workers.

Ramon said the Government needed proper overall policy on foreign workers.

"The Government needs to hold a round table meeting with all major stakeholders to resolve this very sensitive and critical issue," he said.