

MEF: Employers who refuse to give time off may be punished

NATION

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PETALING JAYA: Employers who refuse to grant time off to employees to vote could be fined or jailed, warns the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said bosses are obliged to allow their workers a reasonable time-off period for voting.

Section 25 of the Election Offences Act states that an employer, who refuses or by intimidation or in other manner interferes with the granting of a reasonable period for voting to a staff, will be punished with a fine of RM5,000 or one-year jail, if found guilty, he explained.

“For companies that observe Aug 12 as a workday or practise a shift system, reasonable paid time off must be granted to the workers.

“Annual leave or unpaid leave should also be approved if employees need to travel outstation to vote,” Syed Hussain said in an interview.

He suggested that employers allow workers to report for work later, give them an additional two hours of lunch break or let them finish work earlier in order for them to make it on time to cast their votes.

Besides these suggestions, he said companies could make their own arrangements which they deem appropriate to deal with individual cases in the context of their operational requirements.

As most companies observe a five-day work week, Syed Hussain said he does not see any major operational disruption.

SME Association of Malaysia chairman Datuk William Ng said most of the operators he spoke to are willing to allow their staff to take the day off to vote.

“Many are even encouraging their employees to do so,” he added.

Ng also said he hopes that workers who are given the time off would not misuse it.