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# Down with the fever?

## WORLD CUP LOVED BY FOOTBALL FANS – AND DREADED BY BOSSES

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**PETALING JAYA:** The FIFA World Cup 2006 is an event anticipated by football-mad Malaysians – and dreaded by their employers, says Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan.

“It really is quite an issue,” he said. “Absenteeism, coming in late to work, and showing up unfit to work ... all this lessens productivity?”

Shamsuddin said the problem was more severe when the matches were held late at night or very early in the morning.

“The last World Cup wasn’t so bad – it was held in Japan and Korea and the matches were in the late afternoon. So while employees were a little distracted, it

wasn’t too much of a problem,” he said.

“However, this year, the event is in Europe, and with all the hype, we are expecting the problem to be quite bad?”

Just how bad is it?

Psychiatrist Tan Sri Dr M. Mahadevan says continuous and prolonged sleep deprivation, say, for one month can lead to disorientation, depression, and health problems.

“When a person is deprived of sleep, it can get to the point that he doesn’t know where he is, what time it is, or even who he is. If this is kept

up, it may even lead to depression, if the individual is susceptible to it,” he said.

“What makes it worse is that sleep disruption can become self-perpetuating. You stay up to watch football, your adrenalin gets pumping to the point that you cannot sleep. The excitement and the flashing light of the TV trick your brain into reversing night and day, which completely disrupts your biological rhythms. Pretty soon, even if there isn’t a football game on, you can’t



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sleep,” he said.

Mahadevan advises football fanatics to get as much sleep as possible, and to only deprive themselves of sleep for the most important games.

“Everyone, at any age, needs sleep. By depriving yourself of it, you’re gambling away your health,” he said.

To cope with employees struck by football fever, Shamsuddin advises employers to take stronger measures to maintain productivity.

“If employees refuse to toe the line, measures must be taken,” he said.