

Up to 75% Industrial Court cases settled

KUALA LUMPUR: The Human Resources Ministry has settled 60% to 75% of the industrial cases this year through the newly-introduced arbitration process.

The minister, Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam, said yesterday only 512 cases were referred to the Industrial Court this year compared with 3,200 last year.

"We have saved time and cost. But, more importantly, we have ensured speedier justice for all parties in a dispute," he said when opening the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) 2008 Conference here.

Subramaniam said that in the last six months, he had personally handled many of the cases and managed to reduce the number of cases referred to the Industrial Court.

He said the ministry wanted to ensure there was no backlog of cases as this had caused hardship to the parties involved.

The delays in many cases were because of technical reasons and not caused by the courts.

"We hope the amendments to the Employment Act and the Labour Act will further assist in the speedy disposal of cases," he said.

On foreign workers, Subramaniam said the government was on track with plans to reduce the number by about 500,000 within the next two years despite the Home Ministry still approving new permits for foreign workers.

"We can't help it because the plantation and construction sectors still need foreign workers as locals do not want to take up the job offers," he said.

The government's target was to bring down the number of legal foreign workers from 2.2 million to 1.7 or 1.8 million in two years.

He also warned companies to engage local workers and refrain, as far as possible, from hiring foreign workers in view of the global economic meltdown which could see many workers out of jobs as companies and factories shut down operations.

On the minimum wage, Subramaniam said many could lose their jobs if the government implemented the RM900 a month minimum wage as proposed by the Malaysian Trades Union Congress, as employers might want to trim their operations because of rising operational costs.

– Bernama