

More than 10,000 jobless since Jan 1

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 10,000 Malaysians have lost their jobs since Jan 1, Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan disclosed yesterday.

He said more were expected to be jobless in the days ahead as companies, particularly in the manufacturing sector, struggle to keep their businesses afloat.

In an urgent appeal to the government, he said that it was of utmost importance for the second stimulus economic package to be released fast so that companies could know clearly where they stood.

The government released a RM7 billion economic stimulus package last month and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak had promised a second package soon.

Shamsuddin said the economic downturn this time was worse than the one in 1997 because it was more widespread.

The situation was more critical as almost 600,000 lo-

cal new job-seekers flooded the job market every year, he said.

These comprised university graduates, diploma holders, skilled workers and fresh school-leavers.

Adding to the woes of the jobless was the presence of 1.5 million to two million illegal foreigners who were also vying for the same jobs.

He said the MEF believed the economic condition would take one to two years to improve.

“In the meantime, it would be best for the government to assist businesses and jobless Malaysians to tide over the bad times.”

He suggested that the government deal with the situation by implementing the following measures:

- » Repatriate all illegal workers to their country of origin;

- » Replace legal foreign workers in stages with Malaysians;

- » Freeze foreign recruitment; and

- » Give job priority to Malaysians. - Bernama