

BITTER PILL

for bosses



Workers on sick leave cost employers billions of ringgit, 26 million man-days lost a year

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian employers lose a whopping RM2.9 billion a year in overtime payments to workers replacing those on medical leave.

In so doing, they are also effectively losing another RM1.92 billion that they will have paid at the end of the month to workers who did not work on specific days due to health reasons.

But this is not the only financial burden on employers where sick leave is concerned; they also fork out an estimated RM3.3 billion to settle the medical bills of workers needing treatment.

This is based on a Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) survey nationwide which revealed that employers cumulatively pay out an estimated RM8.12 billion for the medical problems of the 6.5 million private sector workers nationwide.

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said employers jointly suffered 26.3 million man days lost a year due to sick leave.

"This is indeed a shocking revelation but that is a fact," he told *theSun*.

He attributed the main reason for this to workers not taking their health care seriously.

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Healthy lifestyle push

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“I am not surprised by the recent report in *theSun* about workers not taking up the Social Security Organisation’s (Socso) free health screening. Their attitude is that if it is not broken, why fix it?”

“They would rather fall sick and then try to fix the problem as prevention is never in our culture,” he said.

For a healthy workforce, he said workers must heed the government’s call to lead a healthy lifestyle by doing regular exercise, watching what they eat and going for regular health screening for early detection of non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases.

Meanwhile, Socso disclosed to *theSun* that in the last three years, it paid out RM2.969 billion in invalidity and survivors’ pensions, with the bulk going to workers with NCD.

Its deputy chief executive (operations) Datuk Dr Mohammed Azman Aziz Mohammed said the main reason they had the health screening programme (HSP) was due to this huge payout.

“It’s sad to see young people die of NCD. If they had detected it early, these tragic deaths could have been prevented,” he said.

As of September last year, a total of 440,463 employers were registered with Socso, involving 6,946,744 workers.