

## Govt idea on skilled foreign workers levy slammed by industry players

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Kong See Hoh

[newsdesk@thesundaily.com](mailto:newsdesk@thesundaily.com)



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**INDUSTRY** players have poured scorn on a measure that requires skilled foreign workers who opt for a permit extension of three years at the end of their 10-year stay to pay a levy of RM8,000 a year.

Commenting on Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng's announcement on Monday that employers will only have to pay 20% of the annual RM10,000 levy for these foreign workers, SME Association of Malaysia president Datuk Michael Kang said it is not logical and viable to make workers pay 80% of the levy, which is currently fully borne by employers.

He said although skilled foreign workers with experience of 10 years or more may be getting as much as RM4,000 or more depending on the sectors, some are still being paid the minimum wage of RM1,000.

A levy of RM8,000 a year means RM666 will be deducted from their pay every month, he lamented.

RM666 is a lot even for those who are earning RM2,500 a month, he said, adding that these skilled workers will be prompted to go home or move to a third country.

"An annual levy of RM8,000 is certainly too high for foreign workers," Kang told Sin Chew Daily in a report published today.

After deducting the levy, some of these skilled workers may be taking home less than what their newly arrived compatriots are earning.

"Do you think they would want to stay on?"

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan shared Kang's view, saying some foreign workers will not have enough to even cover their living expenses after paying the levy.

He told China Press that the new measure is unfair to skilled workers who have worked in Malaysia for 10 years or more.

The measure will only drive them away to the detriment of employers although it is meant to alleviate their burden.

"The measure will not work. How can skilled workers be taking home less than new, unskilled ones?"

"We may become an international laughing stock and be accused of ill-treating foreign workers," he said.