

Protection templates for workers

➤ MEF, ILO actively promoting guidelines on workplace safety, sexual harassment and flexible work arrangements

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KUALA LUMPUR: In collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has developed three policy templates to assist employers to adapt to the amended Employment Act 1955.

The templates are for the Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA), eliminating discrimination and guidelines for conducting investigations on violence, harassment and sexual harassment at the workplace.

The templates are also in line with the framework of the "Safe and Fair" project, which is a €25 million (RM125.8 million) investment being implemented through a partnership between ILO and UN Women, with the overriding objective of ensuring labour

migration is safe and fair for all women in Asean countries.

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said within it are mechanisms to educate and support its members in providing a working environment that aligns with the project.

He added that the scope of the Act, which came into force on Jan 1, now extends to all employees irrespective of salary amount.

"Among others, the First Schedule of the amended Act has increased maternity leave to 98 days and provides for seven days paternity leave for married male employees.

"It also requires notices to be put up to raise awareness of sexual harassment, provides an anti-discrimination clause, reduces the maximum working hours per week to 45, and introduces FWA.

"These amendments have far reaching

implications for employers and we do not want our members to run foul of the law. Hence, we developed the policy templates so they will grasp what is required and adhere to the provisions."

Syed Hussain said a one-day workshop was held recently in Petaling Jaya and attended by some 90 participants from the manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors.

Catherine Laws, who represented ILO, and a technical officer for the Migrant Workers Empowerment and Advocacy project and the Improved Migration Governance project, were also present to lend support.

"The FWA template will guide employers on the processes involved in implementing it at the workplace. It may be adapted based on the nature, conditions and requirements of each employer and not at the whim and fancy of employees," Syed Hussain stressed.

He also said according to an ILO report, reduced working hours and having more flexible working arrangements benefit economies, businesses and workers, apart from promoting greater productivity and improved work-life balance.

"Evidence shows that having human

resource policies that encourage work-life balance provides significant benefits to enterprises. This supports the argument that such policies are a 'win-win' for both employers and employees."

He added that the policy template on eliminating discrimination at work would assist companies to create awareness and maintain a workplace that is safe and free from all forms of discrimination.

"The template ensures that any violation will be heard, investigated and appropriately resolved, with victims having access to internal grievance mechanisms before seeking remedies from the authorities.

"Through the policy templates and workshops, MEF will encourage business sustainability and provide training and education to employers, in line with the latest amendments to the Act."

Syed Hussain said MEF will conduct similar workshops in Penang (Aug 3), Kuala Terengganu (Aug 8) and Kuching (Aug 7), adding that the adoption of the templates would increase awareness and understanding of the issues, and help employers apply them in their operations.