How to solve woes in hiring of foreigners

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MEF and MTUC say the outsourcing of recruitment processes should stop.

The MEF says the cost of recruiting workers can be reduced if Putrajaya returns to government-to-government arrangements instead of relying on private companies. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: The country’s largest employer and labour groups have urged the government to stop the outsourcing of foreign worker recruitment processes, which they say have pushed up costs and resulted in abuses.

Speaking to FMT, Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan and Malaysian Trades Union Congress secretary-general J Solomon called for a return to government-to-government arrangements as practised until the late 1990s.

They were reacting to reports on the shortage of workers from Nepal due to Kathmandu’s decision to stop sending them to Malaysia.

Nepal’s government is reportedly unhappy that Malaysia has imposed tight immigration rules on potential migrant workers, including those related to processes they have to go through in their respective countries.
Shamsuddin Bardan.

Even before they leave their countries, foreign workers bound for Malaysia must now go through biometric checking, health screening and two other processes that are related to their visa applications. Each of these processes is handled by a different private company.

Shamsuddin said he believed the cost of recruiting a worker would be greatly reduced if Putrajaya were to take back the handling of such services. He said the cost was currently high because private companies would have to charge fees that would realise profits.

“It should be a government-to-government arrangement with Putrajaya handling some of the processes and the source countries handling the other processes.

“Even if there is a need to outsource because, say, the source countries don’t have the capacity for certain processes, then it is the government and not end users who should pay for services rendered as fees are already paid to the government.”

He complained that the current process of hiring was too complicated, saying this was why employers were using recruitment agents, which could see them paying up to RM10,000 per worker.

J Solomon

“I believe if everything is handled by the government, we can bring the cost of recruitment down to RM3,000 per worker,” he added.

He also said it wasn’t proper for private companies to be privy to the confidential data of employers and to the medical records and other personal details of foreign workers.

Solomon agreed that costs would be reduced if Putrajaya and the source countries were to take over services currently outsourced.

He also said many workers ended up being shortchanged and exploited under the current system.

“Foreign workers pay recruitment agencies to secure a job here, but some aren’t given the salaries they were promised,” he said.

Sometimes, he added, they would end up in jobs that were different from the ones they expected.