PETALING JAYA: The use of automation in the future is unavoidable and it is a concern for both bosses and workers, says Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan.

“What is important is for employees to always re-skill and up-skill, especially in trying to work along with technology.

“For employers, it means they need to invest more in new technology and if they are unable to do so, their days may be numbered.

“They won't be able to compete with the world if they want to stick to the way they are doing things now,” he said when contacted.
Shamsuddin said it was important for all parties to be prepared to be always relevant in the future.

He also said the government should facilitate both employers and employees in transitioning into the future as new technology and mechanisation required a lot of capital investment.

As such, tax subsidies would be helpful for employers, especially small and medium industries (SMI), so the reliance on labour could be reduced, he said.

“It is critical for the government to assist employees to certify their skills. Currently, we have many workers who have skills but unfortunately, they are not certified, ” said Shamsuddin.

Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) president Datuk Abdul Halim Mansor meanwhile said private sector employers must prepare for the future of automation while the government must support this by providing facilities and marketplace in order for both sectors to help the country progress.

“The road towards automation requires employers to be a social partner in order to help realise the government’s objective of producing skilled manpower.

“Employers do not consider this objective as an investment that could yield large returns and so prefer to take a shortcut by importing foreign workers.

“The increasing need for automation within industries and jobs has become a burden of cost for employers to bear. In return, investments to increase the quality and competitiveness of the nation’s industries become frozen and left behind, ” said Abdul Halim.

To encourage employers to invest towards the government’s objectives to prepare for Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0), Abdul Halim said the government must prepare guidelines and automation development incentives.

Abdul Halim questioned the readiness of the local manpower to face the digital age and pointed out that there had been no concrete plans to prepare for competition in IR4.0.

“For example, our industry is only half automated and we still practise manual labour. The country doesn’t have enough manual labour manpower, so we import foreign workers, ” he said.

Abdul Halim said the government should move towards providing worker certification whereby skilled Malaysian workers receive formal acknowledgement from the government for their skills.