Employers Federation questions necessity of new employee protections

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A SERIES of business-unfriendly measures taking effect this year have employers on the back foot.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the government does not need to "simultaneously" implement measures that will add to the cost of doing business, such as the compulsory annual health screening, as well as minimum standard housing for foreign workers, a proposed 30-day paternity leave and a revision for minimum wage on July 1, China Press reported today.

Other measures slated for implementation this year are the Employment Insurance System, a 90-day maternity leave and an upward revision in natural gas prices.

Shamsuddin stressed that these measures, upon implementation, will increase the cost of business by at least 25%, resulting in a drop in profits, which also means less tax revenue for the government.

But what is more worrying is that the increased cost may be passed on to consumers, which is not only bad news for the masses but also for the country's economy, he said.

Explaining why some of these measures are not necessary, Shamsuddin cited the example of a suggestion for 30-day paternity leave, saying that Malaysians already enjoy many public holidays.

He said the current practice, where employers in the private sector give employees leave of up to three days to spend time with wives who have given birth as well as to register the birth of their children, is adequate.

"They don't need to spend long hours with their wives, they can do so after work," he said.

On the compulsory annual health screening, Shamsuddin said foreign workers are already subjected to health screenings upon arrival in the country and on renewal of their work permits.

"If the government deems additional health screenings necessary because many diseases, such as TB, are making a comeback, (it must be understood that) the real problem lies with illegal foreign workers (who are not subjected to health screenings). What has it got to do with legal foreign workers?" he lamented.