Employers Federation wants Prisons Dept to play more proactive role in monitoring ex-cons

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PETALING JAYA: The Prisons Department should play a more proactive role in monitoring former convicts at work places if more ex-prisoners are to be taken in for employment, said the Malaysian Employers Federation.

Its executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan (pix) said it was not unusual for employers to be cautious when hiring former prisoners, worrying that it might affect their companies’ operations, especially if the Prisons Department does not closely monitor them.

“This is because the department is the one used to taking care of inmates. We hope that if the call to accept more ex-convicts into the work force is realised, the department will continuously monitor them so that they do not return to their former ways.

“Maybe the department and the government can provide some sort of a guarantee by issuing a certificate to those they deem fit to work, that says they have gone through certain programmes in prison and are hence, qualified,” he told theSun yesterday.
He was responding to a statement by Human Resources Minister M. Kulasegaran recently urging employers to hire former convicts to overcome the shortage of workers in the country, noting that several ministries have started doing so with initiatives given to employers who hire them.

Shamsuddin, however, said prospective employers should be trained on how to handle former prisoners before accepting them into their companies.

He said while the call for more ex-convicts to be hired was commendable, the matter should be addressed together between enforcement agencies and employers to ensure they (ex-convicts) do not influence other employees negatively.

"Employers must be given training by the Prisons Department and the police on how to handle these individuals in a more systematic manner.

"This is also to ensure they do not do or say something that can trigger a reaction among these former convicts and cause problems, simply because they are not accustomed to dealing with them," he said.

Whether former inmates should be allowed to take up any job or be restricted to certain sectors, Shamsuddin said: "For jobs requiring a high degree of trust, including security, of course they are not suitable."

Shamsuddin said it was also important that the Prisons Department share data certain to former inmates with respective employers to ensure specific measures were taken before they were hired.

Currently, former prisoners are allowed to take up jobs, with the responsibility of finding out if they had any criminal records falling on the employers.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Trades Union Congress Sec-Gen J. Solomon echoed Shamsuddin's sentiments that proper understanding of former inmates should be given to employers and this should be done through briefing by the Prisons Department.