

Clear shift in work policies

Flexible arrangements are here to stay, but not the norm



PETALING JAYA: While most companies in the country have embraced flexible working arrangements (FWAs), allowing employees to work from home (WFH) will not become the norm, says the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said that despite 70.5% of companies surveyed saying that they have implemented some form of hybrid work models, particularly since the post-Covid-19 period.

“Of this, 58% have shown a clear shift in workplace policy.

“These arrangements include flexibility in working hours, place of work and days of work.

“However, the normal way of working will remain, though the FWAs are here to stay and will only increase in other forms,” he said when launching MEF’s latest survey report yesterday.

The study, conducted between 2018 and 2023 on 191 manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors, found that companies provided employees with flexibility in working hours (40.3%), flexibility in workplace (39.4%) and flexibility in work days (10%).

The survey covers five areas – salary for executives, salary for non-executives, fringe benefits, collective agreements and FWAs.

Meanwhile, MEF executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said there were several reasons why some companies rejected FWAs.

Based on the survey, 86% cited tasks requiring physical presence whereas 56% were worried about disruption to daily operations, 42% doubted employees’ performance under remote settings and 35% were concerned over impact on quality of service.

Shamsuddin said that while the Employment Act was amended to introduce FWAs as of Jan 1 last year, he said that it lacks clear legal guidelines in several areas such as the maximum working hours affecting non-shift workers.

Under the current law, employees cannot work more than eight hours a day without overtime pay or not more than 45 hours a week, he added.

“This should be addressed. We have recommended that the government use the FWAs concept for shift workers on non-shift workers,” he said.

MEF also said FWAs should not be made mandatory but be left to the discretion of employers based on their sectors and industries.

On the proposed four-day work week, Shamsuddin said 43.3% of companies operating in a shift environment were of the opinion that it was not feasible while 26.8% in the non-shift environment felt likewise.

A total of 25% of companies that feature both types of environment were unsure of the feasibility of a shorter work week, he added.

Shamsuddin said the reasons given included job roles that require managing clients’ expectations and the nature of production-related operations.

“While 42.1% of companies said a four-day work week may boost employees’ morale, this would only bring short-term benefits,” he said.