



07 OCT, 2019

98-day maternity leave proposed

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia

Page 1 of 2

98-day maternity leave proposed

KUALA LUMPUR: The Human Resources Ministry is proposing to increase the maternity leave for the private sector from 60 to 98 days.

For the proposed additional 38 days, employers will have to bear the cost of maternity allowance for 19 days while the remaining 19 days are unpaid leave.

Employers are now "encouraged" to comply with a Budget 2018 announcement to raise the maternity leave for the private sector to 90 days. Staff in the public service are entitled to 90 days of maternity leave.

This latest move from the ministry comes shortly after the release of a World Bank report titled 'Breaking Barriers: Toward Better Opportunities for Women in Malaysia' on Sept 27 which highlights the difficulties faced by women in the labour market.

The ministry told Sunday Star that one of the significant steps taken to address the suggested reforms is to increase the number of maternity leave from 60 to 98 days, equivalent to 14 weeks, under the Employment Act.

"In addition, it is proposed that employers cannot terminate a pregnant employee unless employers can prove the termination is not because of pregnancy," it said.

According to the ministry, paternity leave of three days will also be introduced in the proposed amendments to the Employment Act.

Legally mandated paternity leave will allow the fathers to help the mothers with their post-pregnancy recovery and strengthen the father-child relationship, the ministry said.

Currently, fathers in the private sector are not legally entitled to any paternity leave, while fathers in the public sector are given seven days of paid paternity leave.

The proposed amendments to the law must first be submitted for Cabinet's approval. No date has been given yet on when the Cabinet will decide on the matter.

According to a ministry insider, although the proposal states a 98-day maternity leave, the number may be reduced to 90 to align with public service entitlements and with the Pakatan Harapan manifesto.

The source also said the aim is for the proposed amendments to be read by this Parliament meeting.

When contacted, Human Resources Minister M. Kulasegaran said: "Maternity leave is essential for a new mother as after birth, she needs to take good care of herself to rebuild her strength and will need plenty of rest, good nutrition and help. Both maternity leave and paternity leave are part of workers' welfare, family well-being and the well-being of the community."

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the federation is open to having more maternity leave, subject to the cost not being loaded on employers, but borne by the government or social security.



07 OCT, 2019

98-day maternity leave proposed

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia

Page 2 of 2

SUMMARIES

KUALALUMPUR: The Human Resources Ministry is proposing to increase the maternity leave for the private sector from 60 to 98 days. For the proposed additional 38 days, employers will have to bear the cost of maternity allowance for 19 days while the remaining 19 days are unpaid leave.