

## The challenges of reduced working hours

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**PETALING JAYA:** Productivity will not be affected despite the reduction in working hours that will be enforced from next month, say unions.

"It will benefit the workers for sure as they can avoid being overworked," said Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) president Effendy Abdul Ghani.

"The reduction also means they have more time to rest and generally improve their condition," he said, adding that this would enhance their quality of their work.

He refuted claims that a company's output would be less with the reduction in working hours, and cited Singapore as an example.

"Singapore is a great example of the matter. Despite having only a 44-hour workweek, it has proven itself as an economic powerhouse not only in the region but also internationally.

"Therefore, MTUC supports reducing the working hours to safeguard the welfare of Malaysian

workers," he said when contacted. The government has announced that amendments to the Employment Act, which will see weekly working hours reduced from 48 to 45 hours, will be enforced from Sept 1.

MTUC called on the public to report companies that do not comply with the new rule to the Labour Department or Human Resources Ministry.

"The companies have been made aware of the reduction of working hours, so there should not be any issue about implementing it," said Effendy.

National Union of Transport Equipment & Allied Industries Workers general secretary N. Gopal Kishnam said the move was commendable and long overdue as other countries had already reduced their working hours.

However, he said there were concerns that employers could push for working hours above what was stipulated by dangling the carrot of overtime.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed



**Rest and rejuvenate:** MTUC says the reduction of working hours will give workers more time to rest and improve their well-being. — AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

Hussain Syed Husman said the new regulation would affect companies that operate round-the-clock.

These included those in the manufacturing and services sectors such as hotels and resorts that run their business on a continuous basis, he added.

Syed Hussain said the current shift cycle was possible as the maximum hours of work was 48 hours per week.

"With the reduction to 45 hours per week, it is no longer possible to run fully per week without incurring overtime (OT) payment.

"Employers will incur the extra cost of at least three hours of OT if they run their operations for 48

hours work per week as per their current operational requirements.

"If employers are not willing to incur the cost of at least three hours of OT per week or if they do not have the financial capacity to absorb the cost, they need to reduce (their business hours) to 45 hours," he said.

He added that the implementation of the new rule must be done smoothly by having discussions between workers and employers.

He also suggested that companies embrace new technology to modernise their operations to reduce the impact of the new rule.

Malaysian Human Resources Association (Pusma) president Zarina Ismail concurred, saying

employers should adopt automation to maintain their productivity.

"Employers should be ready to move into IR4.0 (the Fourth Industrial Revolution) ... to deal with the lack of workers if reduced working hours may affect their companies' output," she said.

While the reduction of working hours would benefit the workers, she said certain sectors were bound to set daily targets, so planning was necessary.

"Businesses are still recovering from the pandemic and it is important for them to have proper financial planning and at the same time comply with the new amended law," added Zarina.

## DOSH alarmed by rise of occupational hearing loss cases

**KUANTAN:** A majority of occupational diseases are noise-related hearing disorders, says the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

It added that of the total 2,042 cases of occupational diseases reported in the first five months of this year, 1,273 cases (62.3%) were occupational noise-induced hearing loss, which was alarming.

"Hearing loss due to occupational noise is one of the occupational diseases that must be reported to

DOSH by employers and occupational health doctors under Occupational Safety and Health (Noise Exposure) Regulations 2019.

"The government takes occupational diseases seriously because it has negative implications on the economic and social aspects that must be borne by the workers, families of the patients, employers and the country," said a Bernama report.

For the record, in 2019, 5,699 cases were confirmed as occupational

noise-related hearing disorders.

The statement was issued in conjunction with the Seminar and Launch of the Guideline on Management of Occupational Noise-Related Hearing Disorders which was officiated by DOSH deputy director-general (occupational safety) Mohd Anuar Embi at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (UIAM) here yesterday.

According to DOSH, the guidelines aim to help the industry and medical practitioners, especially OHD, man-

age related cases, among them in the aspects of reducing and preventing, reporting issues more quickly and helping employers, employees and OHD in the process of claiming occupational compensation.

The guidelines also aim to assist DOSH in monitoring and enforcement activities related to noise exposure hazards in the workplace, primarily related to the Occupational Safety and Health (Noise Exposure) Regulations 2019 and Industry Practice for Occupational

Noise Exposure Management and Hearing Conservation 2019.

DOSH also stated that the process of developing the guidelines began in 2019 with the participation of various related organisations such as the Social Security Organisation (Socso), National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh), Petronas, the Academy of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Malaysia (AOEMM), and the Malaysia Occupational Health Practitioners Association (MOHPA).