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Minimum wage saga

WE refer to the letters written by Samsuddin Bardan of the Malaysian Employers Federation (*The Star*, Sept 30), the Secretariat, National Wages Consultative Council (*The Star*, Oct 2) and Peter Raiappan (*The Star*, Oct 27) on the issue of minimum wage.

Come January, most of us will be concerned as to whether the minimum wages as previously announced by the Government will be enforced on our service industry e.g. security guards, waiters in hotels and restaurants or other workers in similar industries that require them to work 24 hours, including Sundays and public holidays.

In the case of security guards, it must be noted that most of these guards work 30 days a month as opposed to most regular employees who work 26 days.

The guards in particular will have to work the extra four days to claim the four days overtime payment (in addition to the daily four-hour overtime) to obtain that extra cash for a take-home salary of more than RM1,000 a month.

The security service employers are indeed in a dilemma.

Besides the overtime payment, the security companies will have to fork out additional expenditure such as the "post allowance" to the guards particularly for those assignments which are located in isolated places, transport allowance to guards for the use of their own transport, and not to mention the "attendance allowance" as an incentive to compel the guards to avoid unnecessary absenteeism. There are also cases where a "laundry allowance" is given to ensure that the guards are in their most presentable uniforms while on duty.

All this amounts to additional unavoidable costs to the security companies.

We, the security operators, are most concerned about the take-home salary of the guards and not just the basic salary of RM900 a month (less EPF and Socso deductions).

This is precisely why we encourage the security guards to work 12 hours (with four hours overtime payment daily) for them to earn the

extra cash. Even the Nepalese guards that we employ work the 12 hour shift for the same reason.

We believe that even if we compel the guards to work for only eight hours a day, I am sure they will find some other part-time job to earn the extra cash during their time off.

This may not be healthy as they will most likely be too tired to effectively perform their duties as security guards in their regular assignments.

This may even result in them skipping work, which is worse.

Security guards are posted everywhere in the country. They are not stationed in one place like the factory workers.

Some people may not be too concerned about security but the role of these guards should not be taken for granted.

They are important in our society to prevent crime amidst the worrying level of crime in the country lately.

We are indeed in a dilemma whether we can continue to sustain our security service industry in the

face of the above-mentioned escalating operating costs if the Government insists on proceeding with the minimum wage of RM900 requirement.

We therefore, urge the Government to exclude the security service industry and other similar industries from the implementation of this RM900 minimum wages scheme due to the extra costs to be incurred from the additional four hours of daily overtime work.

They also work during public holidays and Sundays.

These will incur extra double overtime which in return their take home pay is more than RM900.

We hope the Government to consider our appeal seriously to postpone the implementation of the new salary scheme which is due on Jan 1.

It is for the good of the security service industry and for the economy in general.

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