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## Employers not in favour of hiring aliens

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THE majority of employers are not in favour of hiring foreign workers due to uncertainties which may disrupt the continuation of the company's productivity.

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) and the Malay Chamber of Commerce Malaysia (MCCM) believe that there are no proper statistics showing that employers are hiring foreign workers at the expense of local workers.

Both MEF executive director, Datuk Zain Majid and MCCM secretary-general Zaki Said, said there may be isolated cases but so far, they have not seen any evidence pointing out that employers are displacing local workers by hiring foreigners.

"If there is evidence that the practice is rampant, let us discuss to find the solution for it. But (with one or two cases) don't throw the mud all over the place," Zain told Business Times in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said Malaysian employers, especially the MEF members nationwide, generally prefer local workers because "foreign workers may quit the job anytime and it is hard to track them. This is a disruption to productivity."

Zaki, meanwhile, said one or two incidences are not enough to make a generalisation that local workers are marginalised.

The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) president Zainal Rampak believes that companies employ foreign workers for cheap labour, which services can be terminated easily as the workers have very little access to legal remedies.

"Employers should carry the blame entirely for this state of affairs. It is they who have been discriminating against the bona fide locals by employing migrant workers, sometimes at even higher wages," he said in a statement released by MTUC in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Zainal claimed that such double standards practised by employers have largely kept interested locals away from unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

"Developed countries such as Japan does not experience such a problem because locals are paid fair wages and accorded benefits that are consistent with the prevailing cost of living," he said.

Zainal and the others share Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's view that Malaysians may lose their country if high dependency on foreign workers continue.

Foreign workers constitute almost 15 per cent of the Malaysian population of 20 million and if their increasing numbers are not checked now, it may bring about serious social, economic and political implications to the country.

An economist, when contacted in Kuala Lumpur, said if Malaysia is too dependent on foreign workers, the economy will be affected if these workers go on strike.

"If there are many of them, foreign workers may one day ask to form a union. Even if Malaysians are then becoming bosses or employers, the economy can be disrupted if the foreign workers at the lower end of the job-skill go on strike," he said.

He said although there is a mechanism (employers' registration with Immigration Department) at the point of entry, there should be a mechanism to monitor the employment of foreign workers in the country.

Another economist believes that foreign workers are less likely to go

back to their country after living in a prosperous country such as Malaysia.

He said Malaysians have to acquire as much knowledge as possible to speed up the transformation to high-technology.

The economists, Zain and Zaki are of the opinion that the solution to reduce dependency on foreign labour is by automation and moving labour-intensive industries out from Malaysia to other countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia.

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