

Health and safety in workplaces

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SMEs to be given incentives to buy equipment

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KUANTAN, Mon. Several incentives to make occupational safety and health equipment more affordable for companies, especially small- and medium-scale industries, are expected to be announced in the 2002 Budget to be tabled in October.

Deputy Human Resources Minister Dr Abdul Latiff Ahmad said today that the incentives were being worked out.

"For example, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is also the Finance Minister is likely to announce incentives on several such equipment which is known to be very expensive," he said.

If there were incentives such as a tax waiver on such equipment, it would increase awareness of OSH among employers, workers and the public.

Speaking after launching the BASF-Petronas Chemicals Sdn Bhd's Health, Safety and Environment Week at the Gebeng industrial estate, Abdul Latiff said the Government did not face problems with multi-national companies as they would normally incorporate OSH into their work system.

Abdul Latiff said the National Council of Occupational Safety and Health which he chaired was coming up with an OSH standard to be adopted by SMEs.

"We have studied several models including the 'adopt and adapt' used in Australia. We will absorb

and incorporate the best features in our OSH standard."

The OSH standard was urgently needed to check the growing number of accidents at the workplace:

A pilot project would be implemented with the co-operation of Proton before year-end.

"The national car manufacturer has about 200 vendors who are SME operators and they will be involved in the project."

If the programme achieves the desired result, it will form the basis for the formulation of the OSH regulations to be incorporated into the OSH Act 1994.

The move to come up with a proper OSH system for SMEs was part of early preparations in the face of rulings imposed by the World Trade Organisation.