

**BN policies, not lazy Malaysians, causing unemployment, says DAP  
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The government's policies which have led to low salaries for jobs under the "3D" category – difficult, dirty and dangerous – have been cited by DAP as the reason why Malaysians shun such jobs.

In disagreeing Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan's "lazy Malaysians" excuse for country's unemployment rate, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said Barisan Nasional has failed to implement robust and pro-active labour policies to improve pay, productivity and work conditions for locals, but instead resorted to importing foreign workers.

"How can there be pride in work when it is lowly paid and placed on the same level as unskilled foreign migrant workers?

"It is no surprise that a declining economy coupled with price hikes in sugar, petrol, power tariffs and highway tolls have caused both financial hardships to working Malaysians and caused Malaysia's unemployment to climb up from 2.8% in June 2013 to 3.4% ," the Penang Chief Minister said in a statement.

Lim remarked that in the past, Putrajaya was blamed for unemployment, but now it was the government blaming the unemployed.

"Is being unemployed now considered a wrong by the BN government? Ahmad should withdraw and apologise for such insensitive remarks to show his respect for the 484,600 unemployed workers and focus on creating higher paying jobs," he said.

He said the influx of foreign workers was because locals shunned low paying jobs classified as "3D".

The Department of Statistics Malaysia said unemployment rate is at 3.4% as at November last year, or 484,600 of the 14.2 million of the country's total labour force.

Lim even though there were 2.1 million registered foreign workers in Malaysia, the number of illegal immigrants could be double that number.

He then suggested that foreign remittances by foreign workers, which amounted to RM20 billion in 2012, could further increase with the implementation of the minimum wage policy.

"The full implementation of the minimum wage policy (RM900 in peninsular Malaysia and RM800 in Sabah and Sarawak) this year affecting nearly 1.8 million workers, mostly migrant workers, as compared to 1.5 million workers last year will only cause the foreign remittances to rise to RM30 billion this year," he added.

He said the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) estimated that the increased labour cost of foreign workers in small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) would result in an increase in total costs for some SMEs by up to 10%.

He said the average increase in productivity by 2-3% per year would be insufficient to compensate for the increase in costs of 10%.

Lim said the impact from the minimum wage would come from higher overtime charges for foreign employees who work an average of four hours of overtime per day as well as on rest days and public holidays.

As such, DAP proposes that the minimum monthly wage be increased to RM 1,100, and a grace period of 5 years before the new wage is extended to foreigners.

"This will help to increase income for 14.2 million Malaysian workers and help economic growth by protecting Malaysian SMEs," he said, adding that pay rise for locals can help them offset rising prices. – February 2, 2014.

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