

Higher pay not here?



Wong Khen Chau

FSM's Wong says Sabah bosses unable to pay as much as those in Peninsula

By Chok Sim Yee and Mariah Doksil

KOTA KINABALU: Increment in salaries should not be standardised for the whole country because of the economic gap between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia, said Federation of Sabah Manufacturers (FSM) president Datuk Wong Khen Chau.

"The amounts must be based on the economic conditions; in this case, Sabah has almost five to ten years to catch up with Peninsular Malaysia," he said.

"If they want to review the salaries for the whole country, some companies in Sabah will have to close because they will not be making enough to pay for the workers," he added yesterday when asked to comment on the government's move to review the Wages Council Act 1947 to ensure higher pay for workers in

sectors like security, hospitality and electronic.

Wong said the graduates in Kuala Lumpur were earning more than graduates here.

"It is hard to fix a minimum salary because it depends on the market and the cost of living."

He said the association wanted Sabahans to have a reasonable pay, but a study must be conducted by involving representatives from Sabah and Sarawak.

"The figure in the peninsula may not be suitable for Sabah.

"A detailed study should be carried out before full implementation, especially on regional differences and economic activities," he said, adding that to date no industries in Sabah were consulted on this issue.

It would be more reasonable to have "one price" across the country as people in Sabah are paying more.

"We are not in the old level playing field anymore; fix the price first."

Wong opined that the review of salaries should not be in only certain sectors, saying that implementation should be across all sectors.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) Sabah Branch chairman Simon Yayun Lamadas said a pay hike for security officers will improve their quality of life and work productivity.

He said the government's decision to review the salaries of workers was good news as MTUC had been working hard on this issue for a long time.

"Even now housemaids are asking for RM800, more attention should be paid to security workers," he said.

According to Simon, some security workers were getting less than RM400 a month, and

some up to RM600, depending on the companies they work for.

Based on MTUC research, the minimum salary for security guards should be RM900, and even so it is still under the poverty line.

"The cost of living in Kota Kinabalu is too high. They have family members to feed, and some do not have quarters and are forced to rent a house.

Besides, there are security workers who are not getting paid for overtime work while some are getting their salaries up to a week late.

Security officers are also frequently exposed to uncomfortable working conditions and dangerous situations.

"There are cases where security guards working at jewellery shops beaten up and killed.

"The government should try to have measures in place to

protect this group of workers. "The workers deserve a better life and we should not sideline them," he said.

Meanwhile, most workers in the private sector yesterday lauded the move by the Human Resources Ministry to review the Wages Council Act 1947.

Faizal Francis, who works in one of the hotels in the city, said their basic salary was only RM400 per month, and they earned about RM700 inclusive of overtime and tips.

"Our employer never increase our salary because RM700 is the market salary in the State, which is not enough for a married man like me; I have a two-month old baby to feed too," he said.

Faizal said that as his salary was hardly enough, he had to do direct selling to earn extra income to pay for rental and bills.