

Liow: Foreign workers' levy payments deferred till 2018



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KUALA LUMPUR (Jan 11): Employers have been given a reprieve following the government's decision to postpone the foreign workers' levy payment, made under the Employer Mandatory Commitment (EMC), until 2018 in order to resolve outstanding issues related to migrant workers.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai told reporters following a Cabinet meeting today that the deferment of levy imposition on employers was a wise move as it will give the government time to create a proper ecosystem.

Liow said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paul Low, who was heading the discussion with industry players and employers alike, presented the findings in Cabinet, which found the deferment reasons compelling.

"For the EMC to work, there ought to be an ecosystem. It cannot only be on the levy, it has to be overall. Today, Low presented that the employers need the right to go directly to workers instead of the middlemen...how to cut down bureaucracy to get workers and many other issues. Currently, the ecosystem is not there.

"In view of that, the Cabinet decided to defer the levy till 2018. We need to look at the whole ecosystem. We find that it is wise to delay the implementation, so we can put everything in place. There is a lot of unresolved factors, so we will delay till next year to sort it out," he said.

The call for employers to bear the foreign workers' levy beginning Jan 1, 2017 came as a shock to employers, who had strongly opposed it, after the 11th hour announcement on Dec 31, 2016.

According to the government, the mandatory levy, which was raised to RM1,850 for workers per annum from RM1,200 in 2016, was to be absorbed by employers instead of foreign employees.

The government aimed to shift the burden of responsibility for the workers to employers which would reduce, among others, the number of illegal workers.

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