

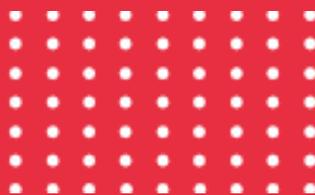


KEMENTERIAN SUMBER MANUSIA

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# KERATAN AKHBAR KESUMA”

AHAD  
27 Januari 2026





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Muka Surat	2

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# Of errant employers and unpaid workers

The challenge to match intent and outcome

**T**HE surge in unpaid wage complaints — 26,000 workers are owed RM220 million in salaries — isn't just a number. There is a story behind the story. It reflects both a positive shift in worker awareness and confidence to assert their rights and a continuing test of whether the Employment Act amendments are delivering on their promise of better worker protection and enforcement. Malaysia's efforts to modernise the labour law — particularly through the 2023 Employment Act amendment that broadened protections and encouraged workers to bring forward claims — were intended to empower employees and strengthen compliance. The recent spike in unpaid wage cases, especially since 2023, suggests that workers are increasingly willing to report violations that might previously have gone unrecorded, believing the system will take them seriously. Let the numbers tell their own story. In 2020, the Labour Department received 6,480 cases amounting to RM40.8 million, followed by 3,472 cases totalling RM23.8 million in 2021 and 4,983 cases involving RM34.6 million in 2022. The figure rose sharply in 2023, with 6,535 cases involving RM52.7 million, and again in 2024, with 6,591 cases totalling RM68.1 million.

**“The amendments appear to have unleashed pent-up demand for justice...**

depends on whether those claims result in real outcomes — timely payments, meaningful deterrence and fewer repeat offences. Notwithstanding the amendments, the Labour Department faces many challenges, not to mention gaps in the system. One such is employers' failure to comply with Labour Court orders to pay outstanding wages to their workers: Between January and November last year, 430 employers failed to do so. This despite Section 69(4) of the Employment Act 1955 stating that any person who fails to comply with a Labour Court decision or order is liable, upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding RM50,000 and, in the case of a continuing offence, a fine of up to RM1,000 for each day the offence continues after conviction.

According to Peninsular Malaysia Labour Department director-general Kamal Pardi, who spoke to the *New Sunday Times*, such failure will trigger enforcement proceedings at the magistrate's court, meaning a further wait for the unpaid workers. There, the employer may be fined and ordered to settle the outstanding wages. But this can only happen 31 days after the Labour Court order is issued. What is worse is that some errant employers don't even credit employees' monthly tax deductions to the Inland Revenue Board account or contributions to the Social Security Organisation and Employees Provident Fund. Notwithstanding such failures, the companies continue to operate. Such gaps in the system must be plugged. Be that as it may, it must be acknowledged that the Employment Act 1955 amendments appear to play a positive role in encouraging workers to speak up as it was its intent. At the same time, policymakers and enforcement agencies must hurry to close the gap between the intention and outcome.

PROTECTION AND WELFARE

# GIG WORKERS ACT READY BY END-MARCH

HR minister says all supporting mechanisms to be announced later

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**T**HE Gig Workers Act will be finalised and enforced in late March, said Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri R. Ramanan.

"As for the consultative council, tribunal and all related offices, everything will be put in place and announcements will be made in due course," he said after launching the Kampus Rakan Grab Malaysia yesterday.

Responding to questions on whether the government plans to introduce specific regulatory mechanisms, Ramanan said: "The government has decided that RM1,700 is the minimum wage. However, in terms of regulation, wages and the riders fall under the platform owners."

He said the act would provide key protections for gig workers.

On calls for a floor price for riders, Ramanan said a uniform rate could not be imposed across all platforms due to differences in business models and profitabil-

ity.

When asked about members of the Gig Consultative Council, Ramanan said the ministry would announce it in due course.

Separately, he welcomed Grab's increase in its contribution towards gig workers' social security.

"Previously, there was a contribution of 30 per cent borne by Grab, but this applied only to permanent workers. Overall, Grab covered 10 per cent. However, after discussions with Grab's top management, Grab has agreed to contribute 15 per cent for all e-hailing riders for their Social Security Organisation contributions," Ramanan said.

He added that Grab would also provide training and upskilling opportunities.

"Upskilling will be offered to 5,000 Grab workers this year."

The ministry, he said, would support skills development through financing assistance.

"The ministry will assist 5,000 workers who wish to upgrade their skills through the Skills Development Fund Corporation."

## Gig Workers Act to come into effect in March

**PETALING JAYA:** The Gig Workers Act 2025 will come into force in March once all implementation mechanisms, including the consultative council, tribunal and related offices, have been finalised, says Datuk Seri R. Ramanan (*pic*).

The Human Resources Minister said membership of the gig workers' consultative council would be announced later, with priority given to major platforms like Grab, which represent a large share of the gig workforce.

"We need some time to finalise the membership structure and

will announce it soon," he said, adding that priority has to be given to those operating on a large scale.

He spoke to reporters after launching the Grab Partner Campus here yesterday.

Gazetted on Dec 31, the Gig Workers Act seeks to protect the social security, welfare and dignity of gig workers, extending protections comparable to those of formal employees to more than 1.2 million people in the sector.



He added that Grab had committed to raising Social Security Organisation (PERKESO) coverage for its registered gig workers to 15%, up from 10%.

Bernama reported that Grab is also offering training and upskilling for 5,000 workers this year, backed by government funding through the Skills Development Fund Corporation, to support gig worker welfare.

Meanwhile, on regulating gig workers' income, Ramanan said

the national minimum wage of RM1,700 remains the baseline, while rider pay is determined by each platform.

The minister also rejected a uniform minimum fare, saying it would strain e-hailing platforms still seeking profitability and that a balance is needed between worker welfare and business sustainability.

"Many think that if we just look after the workers, everything will be OK. That may be popular, but as I've told all senior ministry officials, we must have a balance," he said.



<b>Akhbar</b>	<b>The Star</b>
<b>Tarikh</b>	<b>27 Januari 2026</b>
<b>Ruang</b>	<b>Insight (Starbiz)</b>
<b>Muka Surat</b>	<b>4</b>



By **LOW CHOY HUAT**  
and **ANIL SHIVADAS**

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the Malaysian workplace and employees are adopting it at a pace outstripping global peers.

The Ernst&Young (EY) 2025 Work Reimagined Survey shows that 93% of Malaysian employees are using generative AI (GenAI) at work, with 81% reporting significant time savings and 76% citing improved work productivity.

Yet a contradiction is emerging.

Even as national statistics show an improving macro picture, with labour productivity per hour worked rising 3.8% to RM45.10 in the third quarter of 2025, the EY survey revealed that two-thirds of employees say their workload has increased, even as productivity rises.

Work is moving faster, but pressure is building.

For AI to deliver its full value, employers must work with employees so that benefits are shared and understood.

#### **A workforce ready to move faster**

The EY survey also reveals that Malaysians are embracing AI more actively than their global counterparts, with daily usage nine percentage points higher than the global average.

Employees are integrating AI into routine tasks, decision-making and collaboration, contributing to faster delivery and better outcomes.

This readiness is supported by high trust in leadership.

As 82% of Malaysian employees believe their leaders have a clear vision for AI, 80% also feel confident their organisation's next transformation initiative will succeed.

These foundations enable Malaysian companies to innovate quickly and stay ahead of

# Why workers matter more than ever in an era of AI

regional competitors.

However, early enthusiasm is only an advantage if sustained.

The EY survey also highlights capability gaps that, if not addressed, may slow Malaysia's progress.

#### **Bridging the capability gap**

Only 12% of Malaysian employees receive sufficient AI training to fully benefit from its capabilities.

Although interest is high, structured training has not kept pace with adoption.

Organisations continue to focus more on human skills development rather than the deeper technical competencies employees increasingly want.

The skills gap matters because the talent most prepared for the future is also the most mobile.

Working with the latest technology has become one of the top reasons Malaysians consider changing jobs, surpassing traditional factors like work location.

Although unemployment is at a decade low of 2.9%, yet skill-related underemployment continues to pose challenges, reinforcing the need to redeploy and upskill workers for higher-value roles.

#### **National research reinforces the urgency**

TalentCorp's Impact Study of AI, Digital, and Green Economy for Malaysian Workforce estimates that around 620,000 jobs could be significantly affected by AI in the next three to five years,

**Organisations must deepen skills, redesign work and recalibrate rewards for a digital age.**

while identifying 60 emerging roles, majority tied to AI and digital capabilities.

Furthermore, initiatives such as the MyMahir National AI Council for Industry aim to align industry demand with training pathways, so that Malaysians become not just job-ready but future-ready.

#### **Avoiding the productivity paradox**

Despite time savings from automation, many employees feel busier. A total of 68% report increased workloads, suggesting that saved time is being reinvested into new tasks without thoughtful redesign.

Broader market research echoes this urgency.

According to Microsoft's 2025 Work Trend Index, 83% of Malaysia's workforce say they lack sufficient time or energy to complete their work, while 86% of leaders express confidence in using AI agents to expand workforce capacity.

This highlights both the current strain and the appetite for accelerated automation.

This is a sign that organisations have not yet restructured work for a world where humans and machines operate together.

Without rethinking job scopes, decision flows and handoffs, AI could risk accelerating pace without improving sustainability or wellbeing.

#### **Resetting the employee value proposition**

The survey also highlights a disconnect between employer assumptions and employee realities.

Employers overestimate how satisfied employees are with their compensation and rewards by a gap of 25 percentage points.

Even with improved retention trends, one in four Malaysian employees still plans to leave within the next year.

Opportunities to work with modern technology, including AI, have become a major motivator for job moves.

Policy intervention offers an important lever.

Malaysia's newly implemented Progressive Wage Policy enters full rollout with a RM200mil allocation under Budget 2025, targeting 50,000 workers and tying wage growth to skills and productivity.

Participating employers receive RM200 to RM300 per employee monthly for 12 months, alongside training requirements.

This directly reinforces

AI-linked upskilling and strengthens the employee value proposition.

#### **Culture as a catalyst for sustainable transformation**

The survey shows that organisational culture in Malaysia is trending positively.

A total of 73% of employees say their culture has improved, 67% feel trusted and empowered, as well as 81% feel connected to their teams.

Innovation, efficiency and quality are emerging as the top cultural priorities for the year ahead. AI can support all three if leaders foster open communication, experimentation and cross-functional collaboration.

Culture remains one of the strongest predictors of successful transformation because it builds confidence and curiosity in adopting new tools.

Malaysia has high adoption, strong trust and a workforce eager to learn.

To sustain this momentum, organisations must deepen skills, redesign work and recalibrate rewards for a digital age. If firms can turn productivity into progress and technology into meaningful work, 2026 may be remembered as the year AI elevated not just how Malaysians work, but how they grow and compete.

Low Choy Huat is Malaysia people consulting leader and partner of Ernst & Young Consulting Sdn Bhd while Anil Shivadas is partner, people consulting. The views expressed here are the writers' own.

கோலாலம்பூர், ஜன. 27 - தினச்சம்பள பணியாளர்கள் தொடர்பான சட்டம் வரும் மார்ச் பிற்பகுதியில் தொடங்கப்படும் என்று மனிதவள அமைச்சர் டத்தோஜீ ஆர். ரமணன் தெரிவித்தார். மார்ச் மாத இறுதிக்குள் இந்த சட்டத்திற்கு முழு வடிவம் கொடுக்கப்பட்டு பிறகு நடைமுறைக்கு கொண்டுவரப்படும் என்றார் அவர்.

இது தொடர்பான ஆலோசனை மன்றம், விசாரணை மன்றம், மற்றும் அது சம்பந்தமான அம்சங்கள் அனைத்தும் திறைவு செய்யப்படும் என்றார் அவர்.

அவர்களுக்கான குறைந்த பட்ச சம்பள விகிதம் முக்கியமாக வரையறுக்கப்படுகிறது. ஏற்கெனவே குறைந்த பட்ச அடிப்படை சம்பளமாக 1,700 வெள்ளி முடிவு செய்யப்பட்டு நடைமுறையில் இருக்கிறது. எனினும் தினச்சம்பள



செயல்படவில்லை. ஆனால் அரசாங்கத்தை பொறுத்தவரை எல்லோரையும் பாதுகாத்து அரவணக்க வேண்டிய நிலையில் இருக்கிறது. எல்லோருக்கும் நியாயமாக நடக்க வேண்டும் என்று நான் ஆணைபிட்டு இருக்கிறேன். தங்கள் நிர்வாக மற்றும் வர்த்தக செலவுகளை ஈடுகட்ட முடியாத முதலாளிகளும் உண்டு. எனவே துறைசார்ந்த அனைவரையும் பாதுகாக்க வேண்டும் என்றார் அவர்.

தினச்சம்பள பணியாளர்களுக்கு குறிப்பாக பொருள் விநியோகிப்பாளர் பணியாளர்களுக்கு கிராப் உட்பட பல திறுவனங்கள் செக்ஸோ பாதுகாப்புக்கு பங்களிகள் முன்வைத்துள்ளன அவற்றை பாளாட்டுகிறோம். குறிப்பாக 15% வரை செக்ஸோவுக்கு கிராப் பங்களிகள் முன் வந்துள்ளது என்றார் அவர்.

## தினச்சம்பள பணியாளர்கள் தொடர்பான சட்டம் மார்ச் மாத இறுதியில் தொடங்கும்

பணியாளர்களுக்கான வருமானத்தை அவர்களின் திறுவனம் முடிவு செய்கிறது. இதில் முக்கியமாக

அவர்களுக்கான சம்பளம் 7 நாட்களுக்குள் தரப்பட வேண்டும், அவர்கள் விபத்தில் சம்பவித்தால் அவர்களுக்கு உரிய செக்சோ பாதுகாப்பும் காப்பீடும் வழங்கப்பட

வேண்டும். அவர்கள் வேலை செய்ய முடியாமல் போனால் அவர்களை சார்ந்து இருப்போர்களுக்கான நிவாரணங்களும் இதில் முடிவு

செய்யப்படுகின்றன. பெரும்பாலும் பொருள் விநியோகிப்பு பணியில் ஈடுபடுகின்ற எல்லா திறுவனங்களுமே லாபத்தில்