

Support for WFH workers

THE new acronym on the block, WFH (work/working from home), is a boon for some and a bane for others. This has been a constant norm now for about eight months for some, intermittently for others, and a new norm for many.

The benefits accrue both to the employer and to the employee, both in public service and in the private sector.

For the employer, there will be substantial cost savings, especially in terms of the usage of electricity, provision of workspaces, and savings on overheads, overtime and real estate costs. For the employee, there will also be savings as a result of not having to commute to and from the workplace or having meals outside.

WFH also usually means one can start and end the day as one chooses, as long as work is completed with strong outcomes. This work schedule can also be helpful when it comes to attending to the needs of the family.

But not all employees have the same advantages. While some have a proper workspace and facilities

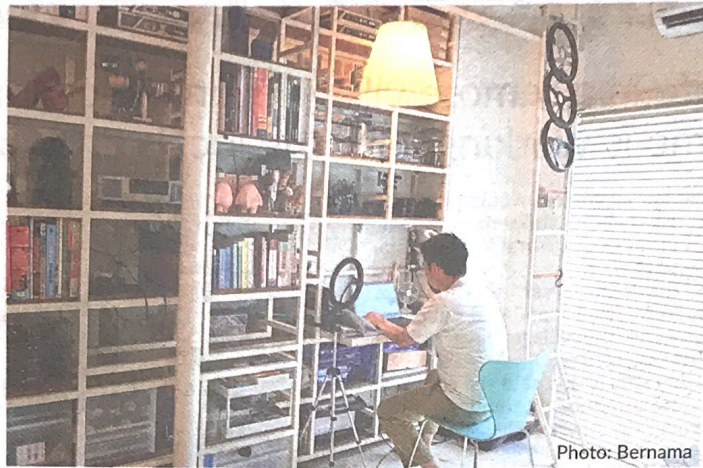


Photo: Bernama

at home, there are those who have to resort to working in cramped living or dining areas, and have to contend with unstable access to work tools like the Internet.

Burnout is also a possibility as a result of not having work colleagues share some of the workload. Both employers and employees would miss office interactions, per-

sonal discussions, the friendly banter and opportunities to vent frustrations and swap stories that are a catharsis for stressed souls.

Therefore, stress levels can increase, leading to mental and physical health problems.

To incentivise this group of employees, it will help if some relief is provided in Budget 2021

for them in terms of enhancing their workspace by helping them to set up a proper workstation and providing them with proper ergonomic furniture (the lack of which could lead to musculoskeletal disorders).

Tax relief should be considered for employers who provide suitable equipment and technology for their employees that would improve their WFH experience.

The government and private sector must consider giving some incentives or facilities for those who work from home because they are saving on costs such as maintaining an office, paying for utilities and providing security.

It is reasonable to expect that WFH will remain the norm even after the Covid-19 infection curve has been flattened or a vaccine is made available. The new norm requires new approaches and innovations that will enhance productivity and improve the quality of life.

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