

# KERATAN AKHBAR

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by NUR HANANI AZMAN

THE number of jobs in the economic sector reached 8.53 million jobs during the fourth quarter of 2021 (4Q21), the highest number recorded during the pandemic period.

It is also an increase of 0.9% or equivalent to 73,600 compared to 8.46 million during 4Q20, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia.

Chief statistician Datuk Seri

Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the increase of jobs in this quarter was in line with the continuous economic and labour market activities following the shifting of most states to the Phase 4 of the National Recovery Plan (NRP) during the period, although it remained lower than the pre-pandemic period.

"With most restrictions lifted as well as almost all economic sectors and social activities reopened, the number of filled jobs also rose to 8.35 million jobs in this quarter (4Q20: 8.28 million), thus signifying that the businesses had gradually picked up. In the meantime, the rate of filled jobs and job vacancies were 97.8% and 2.2% respectively.

"During this quarter, the manu-

facturing sector continued its upward trend by registering a year-on-year growth of 2.7% (4Q20: 1.6%) to record a total of 2.22 million filled jobs. Meanwhile, filled jobs in the services sector were 4.39 million, which turned around to 1% from -0.9% in the previous quarter," he said in a statement.

Looking ahead, the labour market in Malaysia is foreseen to trend up in the upcoming period, but not considering the challenges of the new and more harmful variants, said Mohd Uzir.

Meanwhile, Malaysian University of Science and Technology's Institute of Post-graduate Studies dean Dr Geoffrey Williams said the overall employment and

unemployment statistics show a general improvement in the labour market, especially month on month, so people are gradually finding work opportunities.

He said the number of cases is rising as we have seen in other parts of the world due to Omicron but the experience is different. Higher cases are not associated with such severe symptoms so hospitalisation is less of a burden on the health system and mercifully mortality is much lower.

"We are seeing this in Malaysia too, so we must be optimistic that we can continue to ease restrictions, even to end all restrictions as has happened in the UK and Denmark, for example.

"Reimposing restrictions would be a disaster because although the employment situation and general economic recovery are more positive, they are fragile and the data shows the structural damage caused by the lockdowns. We must not repeat this," he told *The Malaysian Reserve*.

He said although the number of new jobs created in 4Q21 is higher by 20,900 which is very good, for 2021 as a whole there were 69,500 new jobs created compared to 73,300 in 2020 and 104,000 before the pandemic in 2019.

"So new job creation has yet to recover to normal levels and was even below the 2020 level," he added.