

TARIKH : 23 JUN 2022
AKHBAR : THE SUN
MUKA SURAT : 3

Firms facing manpower woes

Firms facing manpower woes

Industry players call for focus on TVET and STEM to address shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workforce that is hindering companies from expanding

BY RAJVINDER SINGH
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Companies are finding it hard to expand as they are facing difficulties in employing skilled and semi-skilled workers due to a shortage.

Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the number of jobs in the semi-skilled category made up 62.3% of total jobs (5.344 million) available while the skilled and low-skilled categories registered 24.7% and 13% respectively.

"There is a need to produce more local talent in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). It is imperative that the nation is equipped with a highly skilled workforce that can meet the industry's demand.

"Skilled workers currently make up about 28% of the workforce. Malaysia had aimed to achieve a target of 35% skilled workers by 2020. The country needs at least 45% of the workforce to be skilled workers by 2030 to realise the goal of becoming a developed nation," he told *theSun*.

He said the mismatch of skills has been a challenging issue, where the expertise of job seekers, particularly fresh graduates, do not match industry requirements. This situation has caused some employers to hire expatriates for critical positions.

"There is a need for academia-industry collaboration and input to ensure the subjects offered are updated continuously to meet the fast-changing needs of industries. We need to work with international skills and technical institutions to bring in the latest

technical knowledge."

Syed Hussain said a university degree alone does not provide access to success, and street knowledge can only be gained by hard work and time spent in learning the ropes of the trade.

"In moving towards IR4.0, employers need to analyse the impact of IR4.0 on the workforce and conduct strategic workforce planning to meet the company's needs.

"We need to develop partnerships with higher education institutions and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) providers to get youth ready for IR4.0 jobs."

He said youths can improve their TVET skills through industry-led learning models, sector-specific skills councils and apprenticeship programmes.

Syed Hussain added that TVET is perceived as inferior to academic qualification and is seldom the first choice of students and parents for pursuing higher education, and as such, there is a need to mainstream TVET.

"TVET equips students with practical skills and it is able to assist non-academically inclined individuals to secure a job as a semi-skilled or skilled worker.

"Some students are academically excellent

while others are skills excellent. Schools and colleges need to identify this early and stream the students in the right path. We need both streams to grow. Failure to do this early will lead to issues later."

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said the country is facing an acute shortage of manpower, including skilled workers, which is hampering economic recovery.

He said there has been an acceleration in technological transformation, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that companies were forced to accelerate the implementation of their digital strategies to adapt to the new normal over a short span of time to maintain sustainability and competitiveness.

"The country's aspiration to move towards a more knowledge-based, high-technology and high value-added economy has resulted in demand for more skilled labour.

"Based on FMM surveys over the past year, skilled workers are required in almost all sectors to support automation activities and technology transformation," Soh said, adding that ongoing efforts on promoting TVET and STEM as career pathways must continue and be intensified.