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50 companies to take over running of programme

TVET

KUALA LUMPUR: The move to rebrand technical and vocational education and training (TVET) will aid efforts to make such programmes a preferred choice, says the National Association of Private Educational Institutions (Napei).

Its secretary-general Dr Teh Choon Jin said this is because students would be encouraged to enrol when they see the support of large companies, including government-linked companies (GLCs).

"When more companies employ TVET graduates, students would be more inclined to take this route," he said when contacted.

In tabling the revised Budget 2023 yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said 50 companies, mainly GLCs, would take over partial or full operation of TVET institutions.

Teh also applauded the announcement of incentives worth RM600 a month per student for a period of three months for those who employ TVET graduates.

"Napei, whose members include TVET providers, has been lobbying for this incentive. We are glad that this is now granted," he added.

Bumiputra Private Skills Training Institution action committee chairman Nordin Abdul Malek however said there should be more clarity on how the RM6.7bil – which was the same allocation tabled by the previous government in Budget 2023 last October – would be spent on TVET initiatives.

He said while various initiatives had been announced, these appear to be short-term solutions and "not entirely new".

"We need sustainable short-term, mid-term and long-term solutions. Failing to do so will prolong the TVET problem," he added.

Nordin said more initiatives could have been focused on enhancing TVET programmes in schools.

"The young are not exposed to TVET, that is the fundamental issue," he said, adding that existing private training providers must be taken into consideration even when the GLCs are involved.

Anwar also announced that National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) borrowers would receive discounts of up to 20% starting March 1.

Repayment deferrals for six months would be extended to borrowers with a monthly income of RM1,800 and below.

Application for the postponement can be made from March 1 as well.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) student Ng Lee Pink said the discount would help fresh graduates who struggle to cover expenses with their starting pay.

However, she expressed concerns that the discount might not solve the problem for the B40 group.

"Even though the overall cost is less in public universities, we still need to spend a lot on gadgets, Internet connectivity and living expenses.

"The government needs to look at lowering the living cost for students," she said.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister, announced RM436mil to rehabilitate infrastructure and replace obsolete equipment in public higher education institutions (HEIs) – an increase from the RM300mil allocated last October.

Universiti Malaya student Wong Zhi Yong welcomed the move as the infrastructure and equipment in public universities are generally older than those in private HEIs that were established more recently.

"The funds allocated would also reduce the use of university funds that could otherwise be used for other aspects, such as student welfare or university activities.

"Better infrastructure would lead to a more conducive learning environment," he said.

USM student Carrie Ann Lim Yi Wen however felt the amount would not be sufficient for all the public HEIs.

"Being in one myself, I can tell that when it comes to the infrastructure and facilities, there is a lot that needs to be done.

"We need a more transparent system, perhaps spot checks on the tender system in universities and on-site evaluation because if there are no specific guidelines or departments to check on the progress and relevancy, the money might not be put to efficient use," she said.

In the revised Budget 2023, the higher education sector got an overall allocation of RM15.3bil, an increase of 1.3% from the initial Budget announced last October, and a 5.5% increase from the RM14.5bil allocated for 2022.