

KERATAN AKHBAR

TARIKH : 18 MAC 2023
AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 10

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JOHOR BARU: The move to scale up the Academy in Factory (AiF) programme nationally is timely and will help in reducing the reliance on foreign workers, says Datuk Seri Wong Siew Hai.

The Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA) president said it was the right thing to do.

"MSIA is all in on this move to get more SPM leavers or even other candidates to be interested in the industries.

"We will give our fullest cooperation to ensure the programme's success," he said when met at Celestica Electronics (M) Sdn Bhd here in Senai.

He was responding to the announcement by Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli about scaling up the programme nationally in the nation's quest to address the issue of job mismatch.

Wong said the pilot project for AiF had started last year when many in the electrical and electronics (E&E) industry were facing difficulties in hiring workers.

"The idea for the AiF was mooted last year at the peak of workers' shortage.

"We were looking for a solution to encourage more people to work in E&E factories, especially those who had just completed their Form Five.

"At the end of last year, the pilot project had involved about 200 participants and five E&E factories," he said.



Great work: Wong (left) witnessing the soft launch of Celestica Electronics's implementation of the SLDN. Looking on is the company's head of Asia operations Yong Chong Chin (second from left), Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) deputy director-general Dr Mazrina Mohamed Ibramsah (right) and JPK competency certification division director Mohd Shukri Ismail (second from right). — THOMAS YONG/The Star

Wong noted that the idea behind the project was for the participants to take up an 18-month training stint, both theory and practical, at a factory before getting certified when they meet the necessary requirements.

"This will also eliminate the problem of hiring employees that don't meet the factory's requirements.

"About 70% of the training is general and applies to other factories as

well while 30% is factory-specific," he said.

Earlier, Wong witnessed the handing over of the National Dual Training System (SLDN) letter of accreditation to Celestica Electronics from the Skills Development Department (JPK).

Celestica Electronics is the first factory in Johor to receive such an accreditation from JPK.

On March 14, Rafizi said the

Special Task Force to Facilitate Business (Pemudah) would scale up the AiF programme to help the country's economy move away from its dependency on foreign workers, and address the issue of job mismatch.

The AiF programme is a collaborative effort between industries, academia and government agencies to improve national productivity.