

‘Skilled digital workers in demand despite soft job market’

PETALING JAYA: Employers have a critical role in fulfilling the initiatives of the National Employment Council (NEC) but require more support to ensure a sustainable economy and a healthy employment market beyond the Covid-19 situation.

MEF President Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. said: “We thank the government for setting up the NEC including strategic initiatives such as PRIHATIN, PENJANA, PEMERKASA, LAKSANA and PEMULIH to support business continuity, job creation and the *rakyat*.

“However, employers, particularly SMEs and micro enterprises in the non-essential sectors have suffered greatly due to the continued economic and mobility restrictions under the prolonged MCOs.

“The majority of these companies have reached a point that they can no longer bear the overheads as they have not been able to generate consistent income since March 2020.

“In fact, due to the uncertainties as to when the lockdowns would finally end, thousands of micro enterprises and SMEs may decide to close for good.

“In moving forward, employers would require the necessary support to reskill and upskill their employees to adapt to new business models based on the new world of work.

“Though most employers are in no position to hire new workers because of dire financial constraints, they could be encouraged through structured apprenticeship upskilling and reskilling programmes with wage subsidy support for a specified period.

“On the positive side, as more companies engage in the digital marketplace, there is currently strong demand for those competent in digital skills – such as social media management, digital marketing, blockchain, AI, data analysis and cyber security.

“There are many employers eager to equip employees and hire fresh recruits with digital skills as these are essential to effectively access and exploit the growing digital marketplace.

“As MEF, we are exploring possibilities with HRDF and PERKESO on such apprenticeship training models as there is encouraging response from our member companies for such programmes.

“These certified digital skills programmes require hands-on training by qualified trainers and it is understood that some of the programmes under the various government initiatives would need to be adequately supported in view of the high cost of the programmes and high demand from both employers and potential recruits.”

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain also expressed serious concerns that unemployment among graduates had increased while some employers were forced to lose key experienced employees due to the lockdown conditions.

“These employees and graduates must be tracked and their status continually reviewed and updated so that we are able to assess the future employment market more accurately to make targeted plans,” he said.

“The lockdowns are certainly not helping with the overall situation and we must urgently move to Phase 4 of the National Recovery Plan as we need to open up, especially the SMEs and micro enterprises where most employments are.

“We hope that with vaccinations and strong compliance with the SOPs, the other remaining sectors would be allowed to open soon.

“We must begin to learn to live with Covid-19 as there is no other way.”

For further information, contact the MEF Secretariat at 03-7955-7778 or fax 03-7955-9008 or email mef-hq@mef.org.my.

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