

English barrier for Bumiputera graduates in job hunt, says MEF

By Adam Abu Bakar - September 20, 2020 11:40 AM



MEF chief Shamsuddin Bardan believes Bumiputera graduates fear being criticised for not speaking English properly. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: Bumiputeras lagging in labour market mobility and educational achievements is not a new problem, says the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

It said the poor command of English among many Bumiputera graduates was the main reason why they found it hard to get jobs in the private sector, which accounts for more than 90% of jobs in the country.

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan believes the perception that employers often discriminated against Bumiputera graduates was wrong because reasonable fluency in English was necessary for those working in the private sector.

He said not having a good command of the language, whether written or spoken, would lead to difficulties in communication internally as well as with outside parties.

"In the private sector, most things are done in English and we understand why. It is because there is an overseas market, hence English is used in emails and other modes of communication, too," he told FMT.

Shamsuddin said many graduates feared being criticised for their poor command of the English language.

"There's no need to be afraid or shy because when they improve, they will benefit from it, too. Companies can then teach them other skills," he said.

Shamsuddin was commenting on a new study on affirmative action policies by economist Lee Hwok-Aun, who found that Bumiputeras were still lagging behind in labour market mobility and educational achievements.

Lee, who is with the Iseas-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, said Bumiputeras had steadily advanced in acquiring qualifications but were still lacking in these two areas.