

We can hire but only with govt help, say bosses

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The Malaysian Employers Federation is working with Socso and the Human Resources Development Fund to formulate apprenticeship training models.

PETALING JAYA: Employers are in no position to take in more workers because of Covid-19 uncertainties and dire financial constraints, says the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

Its president, Syed Hussain Syed Husman, said employers need to implement structured apprenticeship upskilling and reskilling programmes — with the government providing a wage subsidy for a certain period.

“We are exploring possibilities with the Human Resource Development Fund and Socso on such apprenticeship training models as there is encouraging response from our member companies for such programmes,” he said in a statement today.

He said employers had a critical role in fulfilling the initiatives of the National Employment Council (NEC) but, at the same time, they require more support to ensure a sustainable economy and a healthy employment market.

On the positive side, he said as more companies engaged in the digital marketplace, there was currently strong demand for those competent in digital skills.

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

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. Their status must be continually reviewed and updated so that we are able to assess the future employment market more accurately to make targeted plans."

He said lockdowns were not ideal, adding that the country must urgently move to Phase 4 of the National Recovery Plan.

"We hope that with the increase in the vaccination rate and strong compliance with the SOPs, the other remaining sectors would be allowed to open soon," he said.

While the MEF is thankful the government has set up the National Employment Council and the various strategic initiatives, he said employers had been severely hit by the pandemic.

"Employers, particularly small and medium enterprises and micro enterprises in the non-essential sectors, have suffered greatly due to the continued economic and mobility restrictions under the prolonged movement control orders.

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

He warned that due to the uncertainties as to when the lockdowns would finally end, thousands of micro enterprises and SMEs may decide to close for good.