

Budget 2022 job initiatives a boon for mental health of unemployed

By **Hakimie Amrie Hisamudin** - November 30, 2021 8:45 AM



MEF president Syed Hussain Syed Husman says the initiatives in Budget 2022 will not only help improve the financial situation of the unemployed but also their mental health. (MEF pic)

PETALING JAYA: The country's largest employers' group has lauded the various initiatives in Budget 2022 to tackle unemployment, saying it will help ease the burden and stress faced by those without jobs.

MEF president Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the initiatives would not only help improve their financial situation but also their mental health.

"Many workers are anxious during the lockdown because they are worried about their job security. Things are even worse for those who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

"This is because unemployment for a prolonged period is putting a lot of financial and mental stress on them," he told FMT.

The number of unemployed Malaysians rose to 711,000 in 2020 from 508,200 in 2019, while youth unemployment rose to 314,000 from 295,800 in the same period, according to MEF.

In response, the government has launched Jamin Kerja Keluarga Malaysia (JaminKerja) with an allocation of RM4.8 billion to create 600,000 jobs through hiring incentives, short-term employment and upskilling programmes.

Employers who hire Malaysians who have not been actively employed will be provided with salary subsidies of 20% of the monthly salary for the first six months and 30% for the next six months. These are only for jobs that pay a monthly wage of RM1,500 and above.

Companies who hire women and workers from vulnerable groups that include the disabled, former prison inmates, army veterans and those aged above 50, will receive incentives of 30% salary subsidies for the first six months and 40% for the next six months.

Syed Hussain said the financial assistance and job opportunities given to those struggling during the pandemic would also keep them motivated.

"The hope of landing a job in the near future will definitely be taking a big burden off their shoulders," he added.

Meanwhile, clinical psychologist Dr Chua Sook Ning stressed the importance of mental wellbeing in economic recovery.

"If we want the economy to recover, we also need to ensure that people are getting the support they need to be healthy, including financial, occupational, social and health support.

"Research has shown that people with poor mental health are less likely to be employed, which in turn contributes to lower mental health.

"Likewise, people who are unemployed are also more likely to have lower mental health. So mental health and unemployment are bidirectionally related."