

# More skilled workers needed, says MEF

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has warned that increased mobility of workers in the region following the Asean Economic Community (AEC) would leave Malaysians at a disadvantage.

It was referring to a recent survey by the California School of Management, which ranked Malaysia as second last overall in terms of skilled workers.

“Malaysia’s level of skilled workforce is presently low as only 25 per cent have certified skills,” it said in a memorandum to the government during the annual dialogue session hosted by the International Trade and Industry Ministry yesterday.

MEF council member Tan Sri Dr Mohd Noor Ismail said MEF and the Asean Confederation of Employers have yet to get an opportunity to provide their input regarding the AEC.

There is “still much to be done” in terms of the skill levels of Malaysians, it said.

MEF has come up with recommendations in human resource development.

It said employers should be allowed to conduct on-the-job training, whereby the staff can acquire certifications at the plant level.

Employers should be encouraged to participate in industrial attachment programmes and allowed to utilise the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) to pay for the trainees’ allowances.

They should also be given double tax incentives for the cost of providing internship placements, which must not be limited to only internship programmes approved by Talent Corporation.

“Allowing employers to certify the skills of employees at the plant level would enable Malaysia to achieve a 50 per cent certified skills workforce by 2020.”

On the participation of women in the workplace, it urged the government to study policies and implementation strategies from Japan to encourage women to reenter the labour market.

Meanwhile, MEF has also appealed to the government to defer the electricity tariff hike.

The rates should be reviewed in phases in consultation with the stakeholders and a lead time of at least 12 months provided, it said.

MEF said current off-peak tariff rates should be reduced to allow businesses to adjust their operating hours.