

Call for database on employment

FINDING the optimum way to deploy employees in meaningful work and addressing the issue of the steady trickle of human capital out of Malaysia are issues that the Government and employers have been pondering for years.

This is a dilemma that increasingly the country's decision-makers, whether in Government or the private sector, would have to face.

Malaysia has the infrastructure and a business climate that is welcoming compared with a number of countries in Asia.

Perhaps the first step in overcoming the problem would be a database on employment detailing manpower availability that is easily available to education institutions and employers.

Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Azman Shah Harun said the lack of database was a stumbling block in addressing the issue of effective human capital management and other related issues such as brain drain and the move towards high-technology industries, which requires highly skilled people.

But somehow a substantial number of its employable workforce seems to be moving away and it's not just the white-collar workers. Skilled personnel, particularly in the building trades and oil and gas services industry, are being drawn to countries such as China, Singapore,



Datuk Azman Shah Harun

Vietnam and countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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According to human capital management experts, the reasons for finding employment abroad are varied. Some said it is the money but others, especially those who are in the white-collar professions, may not be able to find jobs or positions that commensurate with their qualifications or decided to relocate for their children's education.



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The problem is made acute by an increasingly borderless world. Economic growth, particularly in Asia, coupled with easier movement of employable workers across borders have impacted Malaysia, which has seen a shortage of workers across sectors and skill-sets over the past several years.

In the past two years, for example, industries in the construction sector, including property development, have seen projects been delayed due to the shortage of manpower. The situation is further impacted by the rise in the price of building materials.

The problem of brain drain is more telling, especially as Malaysia aims to move up the value chain to growth industries such as information and communication technology, microelectronics, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, advanced materials, pharmaceuticals, aerospace and energy.

Citing an Ernst & Young survey on human capital development for the biotechnology industry undertaken last year, Malaysian Biotechnology Corp Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Iskandar Mizal Mahmood said recently that Malaysia lagged behind

the region in terms of the number of researchers. There are only 3,400 in the 14 research institutions.

He said there was a need to step-up partnerships and collaboration in human capital development (with local and foreign institutions) or Malaysia's position as a contender and competitor in the race for the global biotech business would be jeopardised.

Iskandar said the Government had a target of doubling the pool of knowledge workers in the biotech industry by 2015, from 40,000 in 2011.