

Vacancies for related skills result of high product demand

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Glorious past: File pic of the Bayan Lepas Industrial Park in Penang, taken in 2018. Although there are many vacancies in the E&E sector, the figure is lower than in the past.

GEORGE TOWN: While many have lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the electrical and electronics (E&E) industry is doing well and facing a shortage of workers.

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) Penang chairman Datuk Jimmy Ong said many companies in the industry had recorded an increase in sales and export value since the outbreak last year.

He said a survey carried out on five E&E companies in April had shown that they needed at least 1,000 workers with engineering qualifications, adding that there were about 30 such companies in Penang.

“For now, a lack of workers with industry-related skills is hampering the sector’s growth.

“Last year, we had about 1.5 million foreign workers in Penang but many had returned to their home countries after their contracts ended.

“There has been no new intake and this has led to a labour shortage in the manufacturing sector, especially in E&E,” he said when contacted recently.

Ong said those in the tourism, hospitality and food business who lost their jobs could not be roped in as they did not have the right skills for the E&E sector.

“They were hit hard and many people lost their jobs.

“But we cannot take them in because their skills and qualifications do not match our requirements.

“And with the third movement control order, it is not easy to take in locals from other states due to the travel restrictions,” he said.

Ong said to address the worker shortage, some manufacturing companies were willing to retrain new employees, or even headhunt those from rival companies by offering them higher salaries.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said although there were many vacancies in the E&E sector, the figure was lower than in the past.

“The E&E sector is still in need of manpower, but not as much as it used to be. With the ongoing Covid-19 situation, industries are wary of spending and expanding,” he said.

Shamsuddin added that many had also lost their jobs.

“As at May 7, the employment insurance system recorded 26,523 (instances of) loss of employment (LOE). Last year, it recorded 107,024 LOE, which is over double the 40,084 in 2019.

“We estimate about 20,000 jobs have been lost this year.

“Industries such as manufacturing, wholesale and retail as well as accommodations and food and beverage were among the highest in LOE, with reasons such as termination of contracts, downsizing and closures.

“About 32,000 companies ceased operations last year,” he said, adding that unemployment was now at about 4.4%.

“The youth unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 24 years old was 13.4% in March this year, or about 321,100 people.

“These are groups which have graduated and are venturing into their first job,” he added.

Despite the high number of vacancies and unemployment, Shamsuddin said those who lost their jobs might not have the appropriate qualification for the new jobs available.

“Since June last year, the country has ceased all intake of foreign workers and many of these vacancies catered to them.

“To attract locals, there is a need to rebrand new jobs to elevate their status and attract local job seekers,” he said.

There were 716,065 job vacancies and 286,425 job seekers in the country from January to May 7, according to statistics from MyFutureJobs, the Human Resources Ministry’s job-seeking portal.

This is a drop from the 739,743 vacancies and 468,102 jobseekers in the same period last year.

According to the statistics, the highest monthly vacancy rate was recorded in April at 213,879, out of which the manufacturing industry had the most vacancies at 184,205.