

Senior can adapt to the modern workplace

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PETALING JAYA: Seniors will have no trouble adapting to the modern workplace if the retirement age is raised beyond 60.

However, the digital divide between the seniors and the millennial generation may require the retirees to go for reskilling if they choose to continue working.

This is the view shared by several experts in employment and business.

They were responding to a proposal by a psychologist and associate professor at Universiti Malaya, Dr Mohd Awang Idris, that the government considers raising the retirement age while continuing to provide job opportunities for the younger generation.

He pointed out that Malaysia, like many other countries, will soon be an ageing society.

Up to December last year, there were some 3.7 million senior citizens nationwide with those age 65 and above accounting for more than 7% of the population.

Experts project the figure will double to 14% by 2044 and rise to 20% by 2056.

Human resource manager Srithren Krishnan pointed out that most Malaysians at the age of 60 to 65 would have experience using the internet and computers.

“So when it comes to adapting to its usage it should not be an issue. But, they do need to be on par with the youthful workforce to work alongside them at the pace they (the young workers) are accustomed to,” he told *theSun*.

He agreed that it is a good idea to rehire seniors even after they have reached the mandatory retirement age of 60.

Srithren said this would ensure that they do not become a burden to society.

However, he said, expectations should not change just because the employee is past retirement age. “What we can expect from the seniors must not be seen as anything less than what we expect from the millennial. Otherwise, this would foster an unpleasant work environment,” he added.

The Third Age Media Association, an organisation with an interest in the senior age group, said seniors should not face any problems adapting to today’s work environment. Founding president Cheah Tuck Wing said this is because many seniors now have been actively upskilling themselves.

“Seniors nowadays are very up-to-date with technology as they have been using it in their daily work life,” he said.

Cheah added that universities and colleges can contribute by offering programmes tailored for seniors, who are perhaps not as skilled to improve themselves.

“Both the young as well as the seniors have to undergo a constant process of having to learn and upgrade themselves in order to keep up with changes. Hence it is not a problem that is specific to a generation,” he said.

However, Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan pointed out that the digital divide between the seniors and the millennials cannot be ignored.

“The pace of digitisation of operations and processes has intensified in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. As technology has become more prevalent in our daily work life, seniors have no choice but to embrace this shift in order to remain relevant,” said Shamsuddin.

However, he believes that appropriate training and support in the workplace can help facilitate the reskilling of senior employees to ensure that they are on par with the millennials in the digitisation transformation process.