



Greater efforts needed to address unemployment: MEF

PETALING JAYA: The saying that there are opportunities even in a crisis holds true for some industries.

For instance, the rapid spread of Covid-19 across the globe has created a significant increase in the demand for medical equipment, rubber gloves and face masks. As a result, more jobs have been generated in these sectors.

However, this has done little to ease the unemployment situation in Malaysia, according to human resource specialist Muhd Hilman Rao.

Data from the Statistics Department shows that unemployment rate fell to 4.6% in April, the lowest since October last year. Nonetheless, it is still way higher than the 3.32% recorded in 2019.

A total of 107,024 people lost their jobs in 2020, accounting for a sharp increase in the jobless rate. From Jan 1 to June 18, another 32,760 employees had been laid off.

The hardest hit are professionals, managers, executives and technicians. They account for 60% of those who have been laid off, according to Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman.

“Most companies are unable to provide long-term and permanent employment because of business uncertainties. Moreover, some are already resorting to shorter, fixed-term contracts but those are unappealing to job seekers,” he told theSun.

Independent think-tank Emir Research social, law and human rights research head Jason Loh Seong Wei, said some steps have been taken to ease unemployment.

He pointed out that measures are being taken to create 500,000 jobs under the Employment Generation Guarantee Scheme, and another half a million employment opportunities are expected under the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MyDigital) from now until 2025.

“The government is committed to supporting reskilling and upskilling as part of the digital transformation.”

Under Budget 2021, a total of RM100 million has been allocated to Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation for its MyDigitalWorkForce Work in Tech initiative to encourage companies to reskill and upskill their employees.

However, there is more to be done, according to Syed Hussein. He listed several initiatives that the government could take:

- * speed up vaccination at all levels;
- * extend the six-month automatic loan repayment moratorium for small and medium enterprises at zero interest;
- * implement the Wage Subsidy Programme now, rather than wait until the second and third phases of the National Recovery Plan;
- * have a dedicated task force to focus on Selangor and Kuala Lumpur where local authorities can provide details of factories while the federal authorities work on screening and vaccination urgently;
- * base standard operating procedures and policies on international best practices and input by stakeholders; and
- * allow businesses in non-red zone locations to resume operations.

Syed Hussein said those who have lost their jobs should also adapt to the new environment.

<https://www.thesundaily.my/home/greater-efforts-needed-to-address-unemployment-mef-YF8052573>