

Boost workers skills to ensure better paying jobs

LETTERS: Malaysia's economy has changed from a low-income agriculture-based economy to an upper-middle income one. The percentage of people living in poverty has dropped significantly and tremendous progress has been made in raising the standard of living throughout the country.

Reforms to the labour market are usually the most important factor in ensuring a steady increase in income.

According to an analysis by Bank Negara Malaysia, the wage-productivity ratio shows that Malaysian workers still earn lower wages than workers in other countries (the United Kingdom, the United States, Singapore and Australia).

In addition to progress in transformation, further steps need to be taken to ensure that salaries in Malaysia are on a par with those countries.

First, it is imperative to increase the demand for skilled labour by creating new jobs that require advanced skills.

To catch up with other countries that have made this transition, Malaysia needs to create about two million new high-quality jobs in all occupations and skill levels, according to the World Bank in 2021.

The **Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)** stated that only 27.9 per cent of the labour force was employed in skilled occupations, which is significantly lower than in Singapore.

Therefore, it is important to develop a highly skilled labour force in parallel with the expansion of quality jobs.

The changing nature of work, in which digital and modern technologies play an increasingly important role, requires the workforce to acquire new skills and update their existing ones. Currently, the majority of jobs require basic or advanced digital skills.

Jobs that require manual skills are becoming less important due to the development of technology. Therefore, the government needs to provide more support for continuous training.

One of the first organisations in Malaysia to address lifelong learning was HRD Corp. It created a platform that helped many industries (manufacturing, services, mining and quarrying, construction, agriculture, forestry and fisheries) upskill and retrain their workforce. Coordination of these activities is critical to develop a highly skilled workforce.

One of the objectives under the 12th Malaysia Plan is to strengthen lifelong learning, improve technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and increase the effectiveness of training to meet the needs of industry and increase labour productivity.

No doubt, highly skilled labour will significantly increase salaries.

<https://www.nst.com.my/amp/opinion/letters/2022/11/851091/boost-workers-skills-ensure-better-paying-jobs>