

## TVET vital to address labour shortage

LETTERS: The scarcity of labour is not a new phenomenon in Malaysia. These difficulties have a significant impact on a variety of industries. They may even impact our economy's productivity in the coming years.

According to the **Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM)**, the unemployment rate fell slightly to 3.9 per cent in April 2022, falling below 4.0 per cent for the first time since the start of the Covid-19 crisis.

Industries that rely heavily on migrant workers, such as agriculture, manufacturing and construction, have been particularly hard hit.

Caretaker Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin said the oil palm industry lost an estimated RM10.46 billion in the first five months of this year due to a labour shortage.

It is critical because our economy is still recovering. A labour shortage could reduce productivity, discourage potential investors and harm economic growth. We must act quickly and comprehensively to ensure our industry's long-term viability and the economy's development.

The government should, therefore, implement a strategic plan to deal with this issue. The measures taken are crucial to ensure the viability of labour supply.

Below are several recommendations based on an overview of good practices from other countries.

First, as the industrial sector will depend on innovative technologies, the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning, our educational system will need to train students to have a greater understanding of and ability in technical topics.

Second, many nations have emphasised incorporating technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in their national syllabus.

European countries have been employing this strategy for a significant amount of time to cultivate their youth and acclimatise them to the realities of the business world of today.

Third, as the workforce expands and transforms, so too the demand for skilled individuals in the needed areas. Therefore, we should take the initiative to strengthen TVET.

One strategy for resolving these issues is to provide training to existing workers. Many countries have a statutory body in charge of workforce development.

In Australia, for example, a National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF) has been established to implement programmes and initiatives to address this issue.

The training fund's primary goals are to upskill and retrain the workforce. As a result, workers will have more opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge.

Fourth, we must encourage businesses to provide employees with comprehensive training to add value to their skills.

In Malaysia, the Human Resource Development Corporation (HRD Corp) is the lead agency initiating lifelong learning.

They offer a variety of programmes and initiatives for upskilling and reskilling employees to gain new skills that align with the industry's demands.

Lastly, the use of machines in industries, such as manufacturing, agriculture and construction, should be increased.

Machines now automate many processes. For example, in the food industry, the entire process is monitored and controlled by an automated machine operated by a person and set up using a computer system.

It is an example of how automation can streamline a process. As a result, labour requirements are reduced while production is increased.

Furthermore, using machines can significantly increase manufacturing productivity in a shorter time, improving a company's long-term growth.

Hence, the government must encourage and support the industry's adoption of new technology to increase efficiency.

<https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/letters/2022/10/843626/tvet-vital-address-labour-shortage>