

Dept goes the extra mile for the retrenched

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KUALA LUMPUR: The global economic slowdown cost 14,827 Malaysians their jobs between Oct 1 and Feb 16 this year.

But all is not lost as the Labour Department has already put into place measures to help retrenched workers find jobs which include:

- Arranging direct interviews between retrenched workers and employers; and,
- Training retrenched workers in specific skills to fill vacancies offered by employers.

The 10,277 workers who lost their jobs without financial compensation will be given priority over the 4,550 who left their jobs under the voluntary separation scheme (VSS).

"So far, 847 of these retrenched workers have been re-employed through direct placement," said director-general of Labour Datuk Ismail Abdul Rahim.



titasking skills to make them employable.

"We have to find out their qualifications, what they have been doing and which areas they prefer to work in."

The training providers are Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad, the Skills Development Department and Amdec,

workers trained were employed.

"There are also instances where the employer undertakes to train the workers."

Workers will be paid a monthly allowance of RM500 while on training, while training providers will get paid in accordance with the course

The Labour Department has a RM100 million allocation to retrain more than 15,000 retrenched workers.

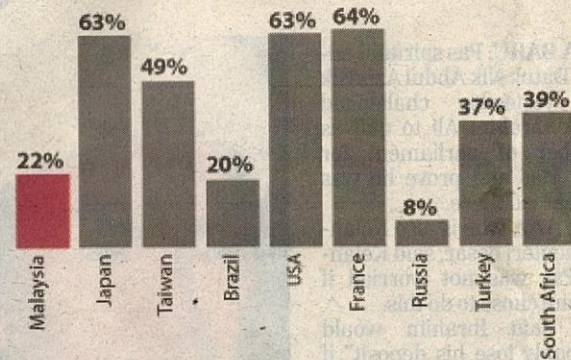
"These vacancies have been verified and we hope to fill them with the trained retrenched workers."

On whether there were indications of more retrenchments in the next few months, Ismail said this depended on how the companies were coping.

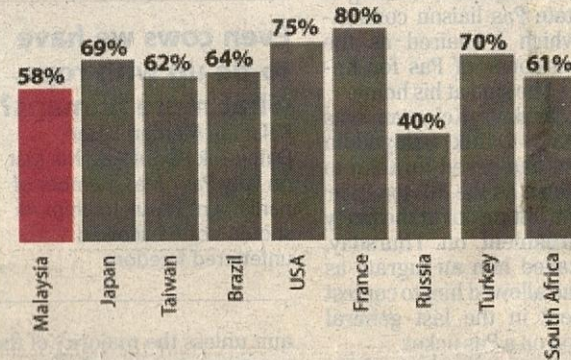
"I suppose there will be but

WORLD ECONOMY SURVEY

The economy is going downhill and will get worse before it gets better



You had to make cuts in your spending in the past 6 months



The ministry will call another 4,000 workers for interviews before deciding which of three categories to place them under. The rest are scheduled for skills training to fill the job vacancies.

Retrenched workers are not the only casualties; more than 38,821 Malaysians have been temporarily laid off for between three and six months and 16,151 had to take a salary cut.

For the temporarily laid-off workers, the ministry will provide training to give them mul-

under the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry.

The ministry has a RM100 million allocation to retrain more than 15,000 retrenched workers.

"We will decide where to send the workers for training as this will depend on the type of skills training."

Many of those retrenched were from the manufacturing, electrical and electronic industries.

Ismail said those who undertook the training programmes should ensure the

provided.

Malaysian workers are not the only ones affected. During the same period, more than 6,007 foreign workers lost their jobs and 13,500 were temporarily laid off or took a pay cut.

Ismail said there was no age limit to Malaysian workers being sent for retraining and the programme was to start soon.

The other good news is companies, mostly in the service and retail sectors, have informed the department that they have 18,000 vacancies.

our call to all companies has been not to retrench workers.

"They can retain them by having a pay cut, reducing working hours, freezing wage increases or lay them off temporarily."

The ministry is working closely with the Entrepreneurial and Cooperative Development Ministry to train some of the retrenched workers to go into business.

Ismail said some of the retrenched would also be absorbed into the civil service which has 45,000 vacancies.

Positive outlook affecting our decisions

MORE home-cooked meals, fewer visits to the mall and budget holidays. That's what people in the world have been chancing for the last six months. But not Malaysians.

Walk into any shopping mall and the crowd has not let up. Queues at fast food restaurants and cashier counters are just as long and signs of "sale" continue to woo people.

Are we naive? Is this the calm before the storm?

It's our optimism that keeps our shopping bags full, says a recent survey.

The Synovate survey, which polled 1,000 Malaysians from age 15 to 64 across all income levels late last year, showed that our greatest fear would be the loss of jobs and house-

While the rest of the world is clutching their wallets and changing spending habits, Malaysians remain calm about the drooping economy, writes AUDREY VIJANDREN

hold incomes.

While 58 per cent of Malaysians have made cuts in their spending habits, the rest are still mall hopping. More than half think the current state of the economy is weak but believe it will improve soon.

Malaysians have a more positive outlook on the economy when compared with bigger markets.

"Close to two-thirds of respondents in the United States (63 per cent), Japan (63 per cent) and France (64 per cent) believe their economy is going downhill and will get worse before it gets better, compared with only 22 per cent of Malaysians," said Synovate Malaysia managing director Steve Murphy.

Is our positive outlook af-

fecting our financial decisions? Maybe.

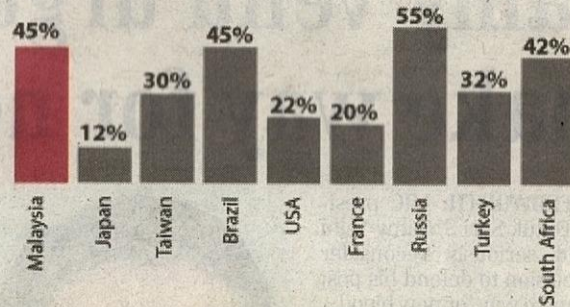
In the last six months, we have been saving less (36 per cent) and investing less (25 per cent). But the less optimistic, have been making major cut-backs, spending less on basic necessities and luxury items.

Murphy said over half of the respondents said they had done fewer impulse-related buying, while 33 per cent said they had resorted to storing more food at home in case prices go up.

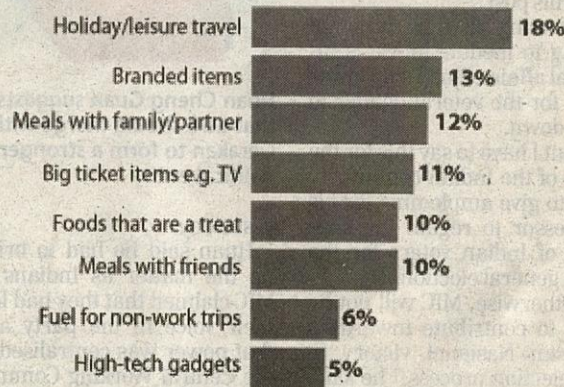
Comparisons with other Asian markets showed that people from Japan, Taiwan and Philippines were also tightening their belts.

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The economy is in a bad patch but will quickly get better



The travel industry in Malaysia is likely to be the hardest hit; indeed this is a global phenomenon. What was the first item you gave up?



Source: Synovate