

Vacancies but no locals applying

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PUTRAJAYA: Six months ago, there was fear of rising unemployment due to retrenchments but now the trend is reversed with thousands of jobs available for locals but there are few takers, said the Human Resources Ministry's deputy director-general of Labour, Datuk Sheikh Yahya Sheikh Mohamed.

He said that from December last year to early this month, nearly 144,000 foreigners had left the country, creating many vacancies for locals but companies were finding it difficult to fill them.

Sheikh Yahya said during the last three months, the number of retrenchments had also decreased — from 7,000 in February to 2,500 this month.

He added that the department had also been approached by multinational companies seeking between 400 and 500 workers each.

Sheikh Yahya felt that it was urgent to change the mindset of local job seekers so that they

could be gainfully employed.

On the part of the department, it was conducting counselling to encourage job seekers to accept available jobs, at least to gain experience and look for better prospects later.

Sheikh Yahya said the department's proactive measures of setting up information and monitoring centres nationwide coupled with the government's allocation for training was beginning to show its impact as more jobless were able to obtain the necessary guidance and assistance to be employed.

So far, the Human Resources Ministry had approved 40 training facilities for the jobless.

He pointed out that the training was "hands on" and in line with the requirements of the industry.

"All graduates from these training centres are assured of a job since they are trained in specific fields needed by the

industries," he added.

The Malaysian Federation of Employers (MEF), while acknowledging the change in job availability, cautioned that this phenomenon might be temporary.

"It is too early for us to assume that the economy is on the road to recovery although there are spurts of improvement," MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said.

He agreed with Sheikh Yahya that there was an urgent need to change the mindset of Malaysian job seekers.

He said that one way to do that was through education and publicity, where job seekers would be exposed to the various job opportunities and the prospects available in the local labour market.

For example, he said there was much prospect in the hotel and restaurant industry as it lacked qualified chefs but job seekers did not have much information on this. —
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