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Move to reward loyal employees (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Stay loyal to an employer and get rewarded by the Government.

This is the Human Resources Ministry's proposal to reward long-serving government and private sector employees with long-term benefits, including educational aid for their children.

While details are scant, it is believed that the ministry has at least one proposal to provide financial assistance for children of employees who have served more than 20 years.

The Human Resources Ministry's general initiative may be a move to neutralise job-hopping, staff-pinching and upward pressure on wages in the private sector - a drawback of the country's rapid growth that has led to a tight labour market.

And before employers decry the move as an added cost, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek is quick to give the assurance that the proposal does not involve additional financial burden.

Asked if this meant that the Government would be providing financing for the reward scheme, he said:

"We have a way to do it."

Speaking to reporters after launching the Bukit Bintang MCA division's programme to improve English usage among primary school children, Lim said the proposal related to education had a long-term benefit.

He declined to divulge details of the proposal but conceded that the scheme does involve a huge sum of money.

He did not say how it would be raised.

The ministry was directed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in January to draw up a proposal on how the Government and the private sector could reward loyal employees.

"It has something to do with skills and the country's human resource needs under Vision 2020," said Lim.

"Our aim is to implement the scheme next year. Of course, this is subject to Cabinet approval."

Lim hopes to submit the proposal to the Cabinet next month.

A draft of the proposal has been circulated to several ministries and agencies, including the Public Service Department, for feedback.

"Several ministries have already given their feedback," he said, "and their response is generally quite positive but there are also some counter-proposals."

Malaysia began recording an unemployment rate of below three per cent in the early 1990s and lately, 2.4 per cent, which by definition means full employment - a workers' market where people have no qualms about job-hopping just to earn more money.

Private employers, in the meantime, despatched their personnel managers to as far as Sabah to look for skilled workers and also offered lucrative salaries, just to ensure the workers stay longer with the company.

Moreover, with more companies coming up fast now to capitalise on the buoyant economy, they would hire workers the fastest way they know how - pinching from competitors and even companies from non-related industries.

According to a study by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, employees in Japan, France and Germany were likely to remain with one employer for an average of 22 years.

The figure hovered around 13 years in the United States, Australia and

the Netherlands.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, while opening the Biennial Conference on US-Asia Economic Relations in May last year, said he was sure that the average for Malaysia was far below that of OECD countries.

Because of the job-hopping and staff-pinching, private sector employers are reported to be reluctant to train workers, fearing that the latter would leave once they are trained.

Earlier, Lim, who is also MCA deputy president, said the English programme organised under the Langkawi Project would benefit 400 Standard Six pupils from 13 schools in Bukit Bintang.

The schools are Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) Chin Woo, SRJK (C) Chong Fah Phit Chee, SRJK (C) Jalan Davidson, SRJK (C) Chung Kwok, SRJK (C) Lai Meng, SRJK (C) Jalan Imbi, SRJK (C) Kung Min, SRJK (C) Nan Kai, SRJK (Tamil) Vivekananda, SRJK (T) Appar, Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Jalan Pasar (I), SRK Jalan Hang Tuah (I), SRK Jalan Hang Tuah (II).

The programme was launched at the SRJK (C) Lai Meng in Jalan Ampang. Later, Lim attended the Federal Territory MCA family day at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa.

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