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Retrain workers for high-tech sector: Wanita

sor; Kamarul Yunus; Eirmalasare Bani; Shahrizan Johari

WANITA Umno yesterday proposed that the Government allocate part of the Human Resources Development Fund to organise retraining programmes for workers, especially among women in high technology industries. Its chief, Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, said the Government should prioritise such programmes so that the workers can keep pace with the demand for up-to-date technological type of jobs. "Such programmes are needed as it is relevant to the need for the current sophisticated skilled-like jobs," she told delegates at the movement's assembly in Kuala Lumpur.

Siti Zaharah, who is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said Wanita Umno is proposing such programmes for workers and women in high-technology industry to meet the future demand for IT-based knowledgeable workers in the 21st Century.

"We are already seeing our industries moving away from conventional or manual-like investments to automation, robotic and high-technology industries.

"Thus, it is necessary for us to provide proper training for the workers, especially female employees so that they would not be deprived of new type of jobs as well as better incomes," she said.

The movement also proposed that workers, who were retrenched due to the present economic problems, are given retraining programmes to equip themselves with skills that could land them with new jobs, including high-technology industries.

Siti Zaharah said the introduction of high-technology industries in the country should also be in tandem with the development of local technology. Following this, she said more centres should be set up, specifically to do research and development as well as create a pool of local scientists and designers.

"We should not depend solely on foreign technology but must develop our own so that we will not be easily duped into depending too much on the foreigners," she said.

For instance, she said there are attempts by some foreigners to control exports of food supply, including by supplying developing countries with seedlings that can only produce padi, wheat or corn for a short season.

"This will create a situation where local farmers have to depend from foreign technologies to supply them with good and new seeds as well as fertilisers to increase their products," she said.

As such, she said Malaysians, including women should take up Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's challenge to produce something that is worth a "Nobel Prize" by 2020.

To ensure adequate food supply, Siti Zaharah said efforts have been taken by the Government and Wanita Umno itself has outlined micro-economic programmes to increase agro-based products and workers' incomes.

"We (Wanita Umno) are currently discussing with various quarters to develop pilot projects for such micro-economic projects and other selected activities," she said.

Siti Zaharah also said there is a need to ensure adequate land to grow padi for rice production in the country.

"We need to remind ourselves of the need to protect the padi fields ... we should not allow ourselves to redevelop these fields for housing or industrial projects," she said.

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