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`Drop condition for retraining'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Malaysian Trades Union Congress wants the Government to drop the requirement that only those unemployed for at least three years qualify for retraining.

Its president Senator Zainal Rampak said the authorities could not expect workers to remain continuously unemployed for "three long years" before becoming eligible for such training.

"Its purpose will be lost if the authorities insist on having such a requirement for applicants to the scheme.

"The training should be provided the moment workers are retrenched or when students leave school."

Zainal said the training programmes that are part of the Economic Recovery Package announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently to produce a knowledgeable workforce, was indeed laudable.

He said the programmes were in line with the aims and objectives of the National Vision Policy for the creation of a knowledge-based economy.

"The Human Resources Development Bhd which comes under the Ministry of Human Resources should also include young school leavers who are forced by poverty and family circumstances to stop their education at Form Three and enter the job market.

"These young workers are the most vulnerable in the job market and need maximum support from the Ministry."

He said MTUC welcomed the proposal to offer trainees under the retraining schemes half their last drawn salary or a maximum monthly allowance of RM500.

He said that apart from Information and Communications Technology (ICT) trainees should also be given adequate opportunities to develop self employment skills.