

Fong: Don't use glo

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■ **By Annie Freeda Cruetz**
anniefc@nstp.com.my

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. — Industries were today told not to use globalisation and the change to automation as an excuse to retrench workers and engage skilled foreign workers.

Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said industries should instead send its workers for skills training so that they would be able to manage the automated machines.

"I have seen factories in Penang and Kuala Lumpur where upon

switching to automation they retrench their workers and employ those who know how to manage the machines."

He said this was wrong as the management should re-train their workers instead of retrenching them.

Between January and June 1, 13,760 workers have been retrenched by 596 employers.

Of the number, 10,952 or 79.6 per cent are from the manufacturing sector.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comment yesterday that unemployment would

rise around the globe if the tenets of globalisation, especially free flow of capital, were not corrected, Fong said:

"Although developing countries, such as Malaysia, do encourage industries to keep abreast with globalisation and change to automation, it did not want this as an excuse for employers to retrench workers and create unemployment problems."

He said the Government was serious about protecting the rice bowl and welfare of workers.

If necessary, Fong said, the Ministry will act to make sure that

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workers were not affected by globalisation.

As for the retraining programme for unemployed graduates and retrenched workers, Fong said till yesterday the Government has approved 12,719 graduates and workers to undergo the programme at Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad.

"The Government has allocated RM86.9 million for these students and workers to undergo the training," he said after chairing the Ministry's post-Cabinet meeting.

He said the Ministry was confident that it would meet its target of

retraining some 20,000 unemployed graduates and retrenched workers by end of this year.

The programmes for retrenched workers and unemployed graduates were introduced in November 2001.

"We might even exceed more than the targetted number," said Fong.

Successful applicants would attend courses conducted by 126 training providers at public and private institutions of higher learning.

Among the programmes offered were on management, manufacturing, computer, information technology and finance, health and safety,

business and engineering.

Participants get a RM500 monthly allowance.

PSMB, an agency under the Human Resources Ministry, will disburse the funds to eligible applicants.

On Dr Mahathir's visit to Geneva on June 11 to deliver the keynote address at the International Labour Organisation's convention, Fong said a number of issues would be touched.

They would include forced labour conditions in Myanmar, eradication of child labour, and decent working conditions in workplaces