

21 MAY 2003

Package-Fong

RM600M TRAINING GRANT FOR GRADS, SCHOOL-LEAVERS - DR FONG

PUTRAJAYA, May 21 (Bernama) -- The Human Resources Ministry will utilise the RM600 million grant provided under the economic stimulus package unveiled today to re-train fresh graduates and school-leavers to acquire new skills.

Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said the 9,000 to 10,000 graduates and school-leavers who undergo training at various training institutions yearly would benefit from the grant.

He said RM100 million had been allocated under the package to re-train new graduates in new skills such as in Information and Communications Technology, management, accounting and language.

Another RM500 million had been set aside under the Skills Development Fund to help school-leavers to obtain loans to undergo skills training, he told reporters after his ministry's weekly post-cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today unveiled a four-pronged strategic economic package worth RM7.3 billion to bolster the nation against the global uncertainties and lend a helping hand to sectors affected by the fallout from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak and the war in Iraq.

On the picketing staged by the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) over the 4.25 dividend declared by the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Dr Fong said it was an untimely move as Dr Mahathir had announced the new strategic economic package to boost the country's economy.

"What is important for everybody, including the MTUC under the current situation, is to ensure the country's economy remains on track and not to make any issue that will jeopardise it," he said.

He said MTUC President Zainal Rampak is one of the EPF board members and surely he could have discussed the dividend issue with the board.

On MCA, Dr Fong, who is also a Vice-President, said he did not want to speculate on the indication by party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik that he would resign from his post on Friday.

"Wait until Friday after the central committee meets but now I don't want to speculate," he said.

He, however, said the party must remain strong to ensure it continued to represent the Chinese community.

-- BERNAMA

HM AHH TS