

BN Youth Lab report: Youth have it tough
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The BN Youth Lab report was today released amidst much pomp and splendour. But the grouses of the young are nothing but pompous.

Against a backdrop of startling statistics and figures, it was shown that the young of the country are still jaded from the lack of economic opportunities in the country.

When a whopping 80 percent of youth have only a Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) qualification, it is doubly hard for them. Those who took up vocational courses still feel 'discriminated'.

azlanAccording to the Lab report, many youth have complained that the perception still remains that one is only successful if one has a graduate degree or a diploma.

As such, many of the young are still trapped into taking academic courses which do not suit them, or worse, these academic courses do not fulfil the market criteria of the working environment.

"We have to change the mindset that an academic degree brings success or money because, truly, sometimes they are just non-value-added courses," said BN Youth chairperson Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar.

Speaking at the Lab's town hall session in Kuala Lumpur this morning, Khairy - an Oxford graduate himself - also proposed that vocational and technical institutes in the country mirror Germany's, a nation famous for its manufacturing and engineering expertise.

Unveiling the lab report, the realities are stark - most of the young will inadvertently start off with a pittance for wages, some even below the country's poverty line figure of RM720 a month.

"When I spoke to some local factory operators in multi-national companies (MNCs), they told me that their starting pay was RM 460," said Khairy, giving the oft-used example in his campaign for minimum wage.

Still an employer's market

The Lab report - which is Khairy's brainchild - was also apparently endorsed by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak as evident from the latter's presence at this morning's function.

Khairy took the opportunity to lay it all bare for the people to see - that it was always an uphill climb for the youth to make it in this country.

"The bargaining power is with the employers. There is no competition between employers offering more pay," he said, referring to recruitment ads for low-skilled workers.

NONETo that, the report proposes that the starting pay for such jobs be published in the job adverts as a compulsory measure.

The report also showed that the petrol subsidy is still an important component among the young. Thirty-nine percent of those polled said that a fuel subsidy for those earning less

than RM3,000 a month was still necessary.

At the same time, 44 percent said their employers should pay them more, compared to 31 percent who said that the government should do more to control the price of goods.

"During the last round of price hikes, I told the prime minister not to use the slogan 'Change your lifestyle'. Because, as clearly shown by the statistics, only 14 percent will change their lifestyle.

"The rest may just turn around and change something else," said Khairy (above).

Convert loans to jobs

In another area and in the ambitious bid to also regain the glory into the teaching profession, the BN Youth Lab proposed, among others, for National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) loan-holders to have their loans converted into teaching contracts.

"Everything starts with the quality of the teaching staff. Teaching should be a profession of choice," said the report.

The report proposed for graduates with calibre who want to work in a government-linked company or MNC, to have access to a two-year secondment in a teaching programme.

ptptn one stop centre kl sentral educationThe BN Youth Lab report is a compilation of a two-pronged study. The first being a telephone poll of 1,000 youths aged 20 to 35 years old from various income groups in the country.

The second step polled focus groups comprising apolitical youths with a priority on youth from the rural areas.

The report has been handed over to Najib, while the youth and sports ministry will conduct a more in-depth study based on the BN Youth Lab's findings.

Khairy had also promised a website to monitor if the Lab's suggestions have been implemented by the government.

"We have to accept the fact that the young have very different views and this is the reality [...] this is the unvarnished truth," he said.

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