

Exodus of M'sians: 350,000 work overseas
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NEAC says in 2008 some 350,000 Malaysians were working abroad, over half of which had tertiary education.

Malaysia is losing its skilled talent which it needs to drive future growth as many are leaving to seek better opportunities elsewhere, the National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) says.

NONEQuoting an estimate by the Ministry of Human Resources, the NEAC says in 2008 some 350,000 Malaysians were working abroad, over half of which had tertiary education.

The exodus of talented Malaysia is further compounded by the fact that the education system, despite high capital outlays through several reform efforts, is not effectively delivering the skills needed, the NEAC says in the New Economic Model for Malaysia Part 1 Report released here today.

"We are not developing talent and what we have is leaving," the NEAC says.

The report says industry players often lament the absence of right skills in the market, suggesting mismatch between the skills provided by the education system and those demanded by firms.

The most recent assessment by the World Bank suggests that firms have become increasingly concerned about information technology (IT) skills, technical and professional skills of Malaysian workers and complaints about inadequate creativity and proficiency in the English language.

The Department of Statistics reports that in 2007, 80 percent of Malaysia's workforce received education only up to Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM).

Data from the Higher Education Ministry show that about a quarter of graduates from local universities remained unemployed six months upon completion of study in 2008.

"Even those who secured jobs, almost one third were in jobs at a lower skill level," the report says.

Retraining of graduates

According to Higher Education Ministry, between 2001 and 2005, the government expended RM415 million on retraining some 40,000 graduates to improve their employability.

NONE"Various programmes to attract skilled talent have been introduced in the past but they have achieved very little in concrete terms. The result is a shortage of dynamic talent needed to push Malaysia into higher value added activities," NEAC says.

The report says better collaboration between private sector employers and universities will help correct the mismatch between industry demand and graduates as well as improve graduate employability.

"Malaysia must revert to sustained and systematic programmes to give Malaysian students

the high level of English proficiency required to compete in global market," the report says.

The report says the current system discourages rather than encourages the retention of indigenous talent and inflows of foreign talent.

Constraints include cumbersome immigration and incentive policies which discourage recruitment of foreign expertise along with restrictive practices of professional associations which restrict foreigners from working in Malaysia, it says.

- Bernama

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