

RM2.15b spent to retrain workers

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KUALA LUMPUR: A whopping RM2.15 billion.

That's how much employers were allocated between 1993 and February this year to re-train workers and upgrade their skills.

Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn said the Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad (PSMB), a corporation under the Human Resources Ministry, was responsible for disbursing the amount.

He said 5.59 million places in training programmes were available over the same period for the training of workers, especially for those in small and

medium industries (SMI).

He said PSMB had set up a Human Resource Development Fund to encourage employers to register workers for re-training and upgrading of skills.

To date, 10,279 employers have registered with PSMB, of which 8,649 are SMIs.

Besides providing re-training and upgrading workers' skills, Fong said, PSMB was in the midst of amending the PSMB Act 2001 to allow workers to use the fund to pursue higher education.

He said the ministry had, through the Skills Development Fund Corporation (PTPK) set up in June last year, issued loans to youths to pursue skill training pro-

grammes at approved training centres nationwide.

"Our focus is to give loan facilities to youths aged between 15 and 25 years.

"The ministry feels that youths who pass their SPM and fail to get seats in institutions of higher learning should be given the opportunity to pursue skill training programmes at public or private skill training centres," he said in conjunction with Workers Day celebrations.

He said many youths were from low-income families who needed money to pursue their studies.

The Finance Ministry allocates RM150 million annually towards the PTPK.

"It's important that work-

ers skills are upgraded in view of the changes in the economic environment — a challenge in the era of liberalisation and globalisation," he added.

Fong said the ministry, through the manpower department, was also aggressively promoting job clearing at its electronic labour exchange (ELX).

Until February, 53,597 of the 82,425 people who sought employment through the ELX had been employed.

"We are trying to further strengthen the ELX by making it easily accessible.

"We are planning a network of ELX kiosk in post offices, Stesen Transit Aliran Ringan and shopping complexes."

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Human Resources Minister