

# More needs to be done for multi-generational workforce

**PETALING JAYA:** More efforts are needed to change the mindset of employers and employees on the advantage of a multi-generational workforce, says Universiti Putra Malaysia's Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing (MyAgeing).

Its senior research officer Chai Sen Tyng said it was not so much about pushing for continued formal employment for older persons through legislations, such as upping the mandatory retirement age.

"It is instead about convincing stakeholders that we can use gradual approaches to smoothen the transition from full to part-time employment to exiting the labour market for volunteer work or other productive roles," he said when contacted.

This comes following a 2020 World Bank study finding that at least 14% of the population is expected to be aged 65 and above by 2044, with this age group expected to exceed 20% of the

population by 2056, giving it the status of a "super-aged nation".

The Statistics Department estimates that Malaysia's ageing population is growing faster than expected, with more than 15% of the population above the age of 65 by 2050.

Chai added that MyAgeing and similar researchers proposed the use of re-employment age, as seen in Japan and Singapore, to extend the economic contributions of seniors.

"While age sensitisation, training and retraining helps with keeping up productivity across workers of all age groups, we need to gradually ease older workers into retirement through re-employment laws," he said.

When asked if the retirement age should be increased to more than 60, Chai said the question was actually about the impact of increasing the official retirement age.

"We must look into our own labour market and see if that is

something viable, considering the current demand and graduate unemployment situation," he said, adding that it is also a sectoral issue as some jobs do not benefit from extending the retirement age.

"For the public sector, there are other considerations at play as well," Chai added.

Hire.Seniors, a recruitment portal that connects seniors and retirees to companies in need of experienced and skilled resources, said there was an increase in the number of applications.

"Most were from those in their 50s and 60s. We've also received a higher number of enquiries compared with the same period last year, with applications coming in from individuals across various backgrounds," it said in a reply to *The Star*.

It said seniors looking to re-enter the workforce intend to do so to keep themselves occupied and contribute to society.

"Most don't really mind getting

lower wages and some even expect it. They are just happy to offer their services while staying occupied," it said.

While many employers still had reservations on hiring seniors, it said this was slowly changing through several collaborative programmes, adding that encouraging results were observed.

"However, perceptions that seniors are more prone to health challenges, which cost more, and are not tech-savvy have seen many still hesitant," it added.

Human resources expert Usha Devi Arumugam said it was not just seniors who find it hard to land a job interview but even those in their 40s once the recruiter learns their age.

"If they are finding it hard, what more for those in their 50s and above?"

"This is more challenging, especially for non-senior positions," she said.

Among the common misconceptions, she said, were that sen-

iors lacked energy, mobility and speed, both physically and mentally.

"Seniors need to show that they are willing to provide the same amount of focus and energy that is required for the job, just like anyone else.

"I also know of seniors who, upon retirement, are still filled with energy and positivity, and manage to secure jobs.

"Importantly, they continuously upskill themselves and have a thirst for knowledge," Usha Devi said.

She said seniors have workplace experience and good insights.

"Use their experience in managing organisation complexity, especially in team dynamics. They can also be good mentors to younger folks in terms of managing stress and being more resilient," Usha Devi said, adding that seniors tend to be more loyal due to the scarcity of job opportunities for them.