

Budget 2021: Increase job opportunities for graduates, youths – academician

KUALA LUMPUR: The government needs to focus on increasing employment opportunities, especially for graduates and youths facing unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, under the Budget 2021 which will be tabled this Friday (Nov 6).

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Faculty of Educational Studies senior lecturer, Dr Mohd Mursyid Arshad said the youths are one of the badly affected clusters as almost 40 per cent of the labour force is aged 15 to 30.

"It is reported local institutions of higher learning produce about 200,000 graduates annually, and almost 300,000 graduates from locally and abroad are seeking job opportunities in Malaysia.

"Based on the findings of a survey on youths by a UPM research team recently, youths want permanent jobs with incomes which commensurate their qualifications," he told Bernama here.

However, employment growth rate has declined in several economic sectors due to the outbreak, which makes youths now very concerned about unemployment as the number of unemployed persons in July stood at 544,500.

Thus, Mohd Mursyid suggested that the government needs to provide digital-oriented employment opportunities so that youths and those who have lost their jobs need not depend on salary jobs alone.

"Generating income via the gig economy has huge potential in today's digital environment, and youths are urged to seize the best opportunities by taking advantage of the incentives provided by the government through myGIG Youth programme.

"However, Budget 2021 should aggressively focus on the development of broadband infrastructure as the employment and education sectors are now dependent on internet connectivity.

"There are network blind spots in urban areas, let alone in rural and remote areas," he added.

Apart from that, he also urged the government to increase the number of entrepreneurial hubs to train youths in the business as well as to provide youth competency development programmes.

Such programmes, he said, need to emphasise the aspects of upskilling, reskilling and cross-skilling to be able to perform various tasks amid a highly challenging environment due to the COVID-19.

The government is also advised to continue the 'Place and Train' incentive through apprenticeship training programmes by encouraging more industry players, especially corporate companies in providing training, experience and job opportunities to graduates and individuals who have lost their jobs.

"Collaborations between institutions of higher learning and industry players need to be continuously intensified so that the graduates produced match the needs of the industry today," he said. – Bernama