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A BETTER FUTURE WITH SL1M

SKIM LATIHAN 1MALAYSIA: Paid training stint with GLCs prepares job seekers for employment

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GRADUATES will have better opportunities at gaining employment if they demonstrate a positive attitude and a willingness to learn and adapt in a working environment.

To boost their employability, they can enrol in Skim Latihan 1Malaysia (SL1M), a programme that provides a paid training-stint for degree holders to participate in government-linked companies.

SL1M is an initiative by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department.

Participants will be trained for a maximum of 12-months, with an allowance of no less than RM1,000.

EPU director-general Datuk Seri Dr Rahamat Bivi Yusoff said SL1M had trained 93,403 graduates since its inception in June 2011, with about 80,000 participants gaining job placements upon the completion of their training.

Rahamat said companies could train SL1M participants according to their staffing requirements.

This was apart from soft skills training to improve their professional appearance, communication techniques, as well as motivational sessions as required by SL1M.

"To succeed in their careers and to improve their employability, it is important that graduates are able to communicate well at their workplace in Malay and English, can take orders from their superiors and demonstrate the ability to use strategic thinking when executing a task," she said.

Rahamat said besides that, the ability to respond well to criticism and to be focused on their job during their training stint might be beneficial for the graduates in the long run.

She said willingness to be retrained is essential for job seekers as not all graduates would get an opportunity to work in a field directly-related to the courses that they had taken in universities.

"For example, there are economists with an engineering or accountancy background.

"There shouldn't be a mental block on acquiring new knowledge when placed in a situation that requires them

to learn something new," she said, adding that this is common in the workplace.

She said joining SL1M was better than not doing anything productive after graduation.

She said the two causes that could lead to unemployment among graduates were not having a good Cumulative Grade Point Average and being choosy about potential job opportunities.

"Students who did not do well in their studies will get a second chance by having positive attitude at their workplace," she said.

Rahamat, however, advised students to study hard in higher learning institutions as their grades might be reflective of their behaviour and work habits.

"It only takes about three years of sacrifice to complete their degree while balancing their studies and social lives," she said.

Rahamat said when graduates are choosy about job opportunities, they sometimes do not see the potential behind the opportunity and preferred to work in a comfortable environment, like an office setting, straight after graduation.

"For example, those who aspire to become managers may work in the food and beverage sector first, if it is offered to them.

"They also need to humble themselves and do basic tasks, like mopping the floor while managing the outlet," she said.

Rahamat said by fully utilising the energy of the youth, they could be trained to be in a job position that suited their qualifications in the future,

adding that this would reduce the dependency on foreign workers.

"Even though foreign workers are employed in industries such as the plantations sector, locals should be the ones who are trained to supervise them, not the other way round," she said.

Rahamat also encouraged graduates to expand on their general knowledge and the company they are interested to work with, besides being proactive on looking out for training or job opportunities.

She said resumes also play a part in making a good first impression to potential employers.

"A company might get thousands of applicants, and job seekers need to convince potential employers on why they are the best candidate for them," she said.

Based on feedback from employers, companies are keen to employ SL1M participants as the training provides them with confidence to take on the challenges of the job.

One of the graduates who have benefited from the training was TH Plantations Bhd executive (insurance) Muhammad Mahfudz Mohammad Yusuf.

He enrolled in SL1M on Feb 1 last year for a six-month training stint at the company.

Mahfudz, 24 from Alor Setar, Kedah, graduated with a degree in Office Systems Management from Universiti Teknologi Mara.

"I was turned down by potential employers because I had no experience."

He was placed at the insurance unit of the Estate and Administration Department despite having no prior knowledge about the tasks ahead.

"During my training, I was given the opportunity and trust to represent the company in negotiating the medical benefit terms for our workforce with a reputable healthcare provider," he said.

Mahfudz, who is now a permanent employee, said employees need to be creative while handling tasks given by their supervisor during the training period.

Another employee who has benefited from SL1M was Basker Balasundram, 34.

Basker, who has a degree in Computer Networking, is now an Assistant Manager Technology and Partnership at VADS Lyfe Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM).

"After graduation, I worked for four years as technician at several factories until the last one closed down," he said.

He said he had no permanent employment for five years after that and, at times, had to ask his father, a lorry driver, for help to ease his financial burden.

"I joined SL1M two years ago. TM

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was very generous to me by providing free accommodation for the first two months during the six-month training while I was having my classroom training," he said.

He said during training, he obtained Cisco certification that was relevant to his job requirement, boosting his employability.

"SL1M and TM have changed my life. Because of them, I have a better life. I am very grateful," he said.



Muhammad Mahfudz Mohammad Yusuf (left) and **Basker Balasundram** (second from right) are two graduates who have benefited from the SL1M programme. Economic Planning Unit director-general **Datuk Seri Dr Rahamat Bivi Yusoff** (second from left) says willingness to be re-trained is essential for job seekers. Also with them is SL1M secretariat head **Norashikin Ismail** (right). Pic by Ahmad Irham Mohd Noor