

'Malaysians don't last long in unfavourable jobs'



By [Tharanya Arumugam](#) - August 3, 2020 @ 11:38am



Plantation jobs that come with benefits like free housing are an option local workers can explore. - NSTP/File pic

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians may be more willing to take up "low quality" jobs amid the economic setbacks caused by Covid-19, but retaining them in such a working environment remains a challenge for employers.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan described local job seekers' reception of least favourable jobs, including 3D jobs (dirty, dangerous, and difficult), as "lukewarm".

"Even when locals do take up such jobs, their staying power (at the workplace) is low.

"Some work for as short as two to three hours or only three to four months, then they quit," he told the *New Straits Times*.

He said this was not just due to wages, but also because many Malaysians were not used to working in such environments, like wholesale markets or as operations staff in the manufacturing industry.

"Malaysians working at *pasar borong*, for example, earn between RM1,800 and RM2,000 a month, which is double the amount foreign workers earn.

"Yet, locals are not keen on staying long in these kinds of jobs. They need to be brave and strengthen their attitude towards working less favourable jobs and should treat all jobs with respect."

He said sectors that saw a spike in local workers include the services and manufacturing sectors, while the plantation and construction industry were the least popular.

He said the shift was not due to passion for the job, but because of the unavailability of their preferred vocations.

"The plantation sector promises a career path and gives good benefits, such as free housing and facilities, with a salary of more than RM2,000 (depending on productivity). So these are areas locals should try to explore.

"However, my main worry is that once the economy improves, then they (Malaysians) wouldn't want to stay in those sectors," he said, adding that this could lead to industries and businesses turning their attention back to foreign workers.

Shamsuddin said the country could work with stakeholders to turn the situation around in less-preferred jobs, adding that more effort was needed to reduce dependency on foreign workers.

He said some jobs should be "rebranded" to attract more local workers and employers could invest in technology to make some jobs more attractive.

He said employees' skills need to be recognised and certified and all jobs should be "professionalised".

"We need to make the job richer, more interesting and more enjoyable. For example, if you expect locals to push or pull a wheelbarrow at a market, I would say that is not interesting to do.

"But if there is some simple gadget or machine to aid the job, it may improve the situation.

"Technology improves productivity.

"Another example is to rebrand security guards as auxiliary police. That is a recognised profession by the police that comes with training and they are provided with a weapon.

"This can help keep crime rates low, which is important.

"If society doesn't look down on those kinds of jobs, then the reception of locals to such jobs will change."