Len raises the alarm bell

BY HARUN JAU

KUCHING: Sarawak is collaborating with technical institutions in the Peninsular as well as overseas with the aim of training more local school leavers to acquire technical skills.

Assistant Minister for the Promotion of Technical Education, Datu Haji Len Talif Salleh said the state expects about 200,000 technical jobs to be made available by 2015.

"Going by the current trend, Sarawak will still be short of workers," he told reporters after officiating the ‘MARA Education Carnival 2012’ at Permata Exhibition Hall in Jalan Bukit Mata here yesterday.

Len also said the state is not on track to produce enough number of technically trained workers by 2015.

"Unfortunately, not at the moment, but we are doing a fast track on how we can help create enough workers to fill in the jobs. Even if we can produce 30,000 every year, the next three years we will not come to that. I would say that we will still be acutely short of workers, so there must be a solution to match the requirement," he said.

Len said Sarawak has about 35,000 Form Five school leavers every year and some of them are going for academic line while some others are being trained in vocational and technical education.

“We have only 84 institutions in Sarawak producing certificates, diplomas and degrees. We are still far behind in numbers, that’s why we need to collaborate with institutions from the Peninsular and overseas on how best we can fill the gap within the next few years.

“In terms of the range of courses, we are quite satisfied. But we are bringing in new industries, which means that once they have finished their training either at certificate, diploma or degree level, they need to be retrained in the specific industries,” he explained.

Presently, Tukoyama is taking a few students from UNIMAS to be trained in Japan and by the end of this year, Tokuyama’s plant in Samalaju will be in operation.

The number of investors coming here has been beyond expectation, especially with the sudden influx of investors to Samalaju and Mukah.

"Even to the extent that our power requirement is still far behind when we look at the total number of projects approved," said Len.

Some of the industries will be operational at the end of this year while many others will be operational by 2015.

If we cannot provide the required manpower, we will have no choice but to bring workers from the Peninsular or even foreigners as well.

According to Len, we might be short of around 15 per cent or 20 per cent of workers by 2015.

“We need to work on the shortfall and how we ought to plug on the shortage. Hopefully, the economy will be picking up as it is now. That will be good for the investors who are coming here in large numbers in a very short time,” he said.

The Chief Minister is now leading a Sarawak trade delegation to Japan and investors like Toyota are coming in, according to Len.

Len also suggested that MARA should involve more intensively in the field of technical and vocational education for Bumiputera youth, especially in the rural areas.

With the experience and resources that it has, he believed MARA could enhance the capacity of its existing 24 GiatMara and diversify its course curriculum according to current manpower need of the market.

IKM, he said, should also be set up in every division.

MARA Sarawak Director Shazali Salleh informed that for the July intake, MARA is providing 40,000 places for various programmes at certificate, diploma and degree levels.
LEN (right) interacts with a representative of one of the participating education institutions as Shazali (left) and Rohayah (second right) listen.
LEN (centre) launches the MARA Education Carnival as MARA Senior Deputy Director Rohayah Mohd Zain (left) and its Sarawak Director Shazali Salleh look on. PHOTOS: TH LU

A section of the students attending the official opening of the MARA Education Carnival.