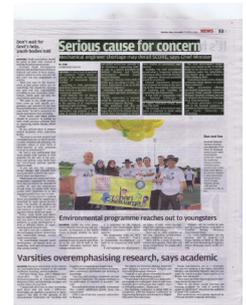


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Serious cause for concern

Mechanical engineer shortage may derail SCORE, says Chief Minister

YU JI

KUCHING: A critical lack of mechanical engineers could throw a spanner in the works for Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE).

According to state government projections, between 2016 and 2020, there could be a shortfall of 27,600 mechanical engineers.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem described the shortage as "critical" and "alarming", in a speech at the opening of an engineering conference here on Friday.

"Based on current capacity, our universities can produce a maximum of around 1,700 professional and skilled technicians annually in the mechanical engineering field," he said, in a speech presented by Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah.

"However, between 2016-2020, if SCORE goes according to plan, we expect requirement to be at 29,300

mechanical engineers."

Authorities would embark on a two-pronged approach, according to Adenan.

Firstly, universities in Sarawak would be encouraged to scale up mechanical engineer offerings.

"The profession will also be better promoted to youths in the hopes that Form Five school-leavers will be more encouraged to further their studies in mechanical engineering."

Secondly, the state government would adopt a "temporary" policy of allowing an influx of foreign mechanical engineers. Malaysian graduates would be prioritised.

Fatimah represented Adenan's text of speech on Friday at the opening of the International Conference on Learning and Teaching in Computing and Engineering.

It was held in conjunction with the Regional Conference in Engineering Education and Research

in Higher Education taking place here this week.

The shortage of mechanical engineers is expected to boost salary rates among professionals.

The state government's projections were based on the "U-SCORE" study on the demand and supply of workforce under the industrialisation master plan, which began in 2008, ending in 2030.

It revolves around a series of dams producing cheap electric to attract heavy industries.

Public universities offering mechanical engineering courses in Sarawak today include Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) but not at institutes like Universiti Teknologi Mara, Kota Samarahan.

At private universities, it is available at the Sarawak campuses of Swinburne University of Technology and Curtin University of Technology.