

Ministry's GEM portal offers brighter outlook



Better horizons: Mohamed Khaled launching the portal with (from left) Higher Education deputy secretary-general (policy) Datuk Dr Haji Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian, Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Mohammad Yusof Apdal and Stamford Asia Creative Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Ivan Wong. - LOW LAY PHON/The Star

WITH the recent unveiling of the Graduate Employability Management (GEM) portal, fresh graduates expressed a brighter outlook on their employability.

Nivesh Naga Raja, 23, said it is tough to find a job within his field that pays sufficiently.

“The GEM portal has great potential to fix the issue of underemployment and also help fresh graduates find a good paying job that will not force them to resign or take up more than one job due to issues related to the rising cost of living,” said the Multimedia University computer science graduate.

He added that the portal could provide better outreach for employers to hire fresh graduates in search of a job according to the fields they pursued in university.

The Higher Education Ministry's new portal, launched by its minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin at the 2023 Graduate Labour Market Conference (PPKG) in Kuala Lumpur

on Nov 1, is a platform designed specifically for graduates under the ministry who are seeking practical training and employment opportunities.

Speaking to reporters after the event, Mohamed Khaled said the ministry has set RM4,000 as the platform's "premium salary rate" – a figure derived from a pilot project by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to produce electrical and electronic (E&E) talent.

He added that discussions are underway to propose a premium salary rate for sectors beyond E&E.

Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS electrical engineering graduate Darren Chen said he sees GEM as a gateway for him to land the right job opportunity that pays well.

"The number of engineers in Malaysia is very low. Many of my peers have either switched to fields they never studied for or are still in the midst of securing a job.

"I see a lot of prospects of what the portal can bring to the table for fresh graduates, especially with the premium salary rate set at RM4,000," said the 24-year-old.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) public relations graduate Aiman Alya Ahmad Fuzaimi said news about the launch of the portal gives her more hope that there would be better paying jobs in store.

"It is good that the premium salary rate is being proposed for jobs in the E&E sector. However, I hope this initiative will be for sectors beyond E&E as well," she said.

The 23-year-old added that she looks forward to exploring what the portal has to offer, keeping her "fingers crossed" for the premium salary rate to be proposed for jobs in her field, which is communication.

"The cost of living these days has us by the neck, and many fresh graduates out there are underemployed, doing jobs they are not skilled at and therefore being paid less," she said.

Mohamed Khaled said the ministry acknowledges that much work needs to be done to achieve the premium salary rate, adding that collaborating with industry professionals is one of the strategies being considered.

He said a range of initiatives and strategies have been implemented to ensure the graduates produced meet the demands of the job market, thereby minimising the risks of unemployment and underemployment.

"Along with the cooperation of the Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti), the ministry has intensified efforts to identify the needs of industry in the future according to the requirements of the New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030," he said.

He said specific initiatives, such as job matching, have been taken for prospective graduates to seamlessly integrate into industry. This effort includes the creation of a digital platform like GEM.

In a statement on Nov 1, the ministry said the portal enables industry to identify candidates who meet the necessary criteria for job placements.

It said some of the industries being studied to explore the potential of offering premium salary rates include the halal sector, finance and banking, transportation, and standard auditing.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the initiative of launching the portal by the ministry was a good one, adding that any avenue or channel to help graduates gain access to the employment market is to be applauded.

He added that premium salary rates should be proposed to sectors beyond the E&E sector as salaries are market and sector drivers.

On another matter, Mohamed Khaled said universities next year must not ask students to fork out more than RM1,500 upon registration.

When asked the potential consequences if these rules were disregarded, he said the ministry would intervene.

He added that this is in line with the value of the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) advance loan (WPP), which amounts to RM1,500 for all eligible prospective students.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/education/2023/11/26/ministrys-gem-portal-offers-brighter-outlook>