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60,000 Malaysian graduates unemployed

A government survey in Malaysia finds most graduates unemployed are Malays with poor English language skills, irrelevant degrees.

Source: *New Straits Times*

Nearly 60,000 Malaysian graduates are unemployed, a government survey has revealed.

It also confirmed what has long been known: Most of the unemployed are Malays from lower-income families who lack command of the English language. Also, their qualifications are mostly not in demand.

These results emerged recently from a project initiated by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, where the unemployed were asked to sign up for jobs.

The project was initiated to gauge the extent of the problem and to enable the government to fine-tune its job creation policies.

As many as 59,250 graduates signed up, a *New Straits Times* report said.

Many of the participants were Malays with degrees in business studies or information technology from public universities, where courses are taught in Malay.

Earlier estimates had put the number of jobless in the country at between 18,000 and 82,000.

The latest results also showed that 71 percent of the unemployed were female, 61 percent were from poor families, and 80 percent were educated with government loans from the National Higher Education Fund (PTPTN).

Those surveyed cited the lack of job experience, poor command of the English language with inadequate communication skills, and the possession of qualifications that are not relevant to the job market as reasons for not being able to find suitable employment.

"Most have been jobless for more than a year," Malaysia's Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn was quoted as saying.



The results have led to some introspection. There are concerns that there could be many more degree-holders on the list of 400,000 individuals who are currently unemployed.

Malaysian HR Minister
Datuk Dr Fong Chan
Onn

The results of the survey will also likely give a boost to the government's ongoing efforts to promote English usage in schools and to encourage Malays to take up relevant degree courses.

"We have highly qualified graduates coming here who cannot construct a proper sentence in English. They lack confidence and it is not difficult to imagine why they are jobless," Geraldine Fernandes, the operator of a private college, told *The Straits Times*.



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Over the past two years, colleges and schools like the one run by her have been helping to retrain unemployed graduates to make them more marketable.

The Human Resources Ministry had spent up to RM100 million (about C\$31.3 million) during the past few years on such programs.

A recent survey found that Universiti Malaya, the country's premier university, has slipped in the rankings. From being among the top 100 universities in the world, it is now ranked below 150.

The government has taken steps to address falling standards in universities and schools, by gradually re-introducing the use of English in schools. The language is now being used to teach science and mathematics in primary schools.

Eventually, English could replace Malay as the language of instruction for these two subjects, right up to tertiary level.



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