

Engineers, Interns to Get Placements



THE timber industry is on the lookout for more local graduates as it moves into the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0).

Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) president Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor said the council has created the first-of-its-kind Engineer Placement and Internship Placement (EPIP) in the Timber Industry 2021 programme, which is divided into two parts – for engineers and for interns.

He said these are part of the council's strategic plan, which includes intensifying efforts to achieve digitisation and automation in the industry as it enters IR4.0.

“(It is also) to increase the number of knowledgeable workers, especially in the fields of engineering and design of wood products and furniture,” he said at the launch of the event on March 2.

Mazli Zakuan said the engineer placement programme offers engineers workplace training under professional guidance for a year.

As for the internship, he said it is open to all undergraduates who will undergo industrial training.

“It will be for a maximum of six months, with training provided based on the timber industry's needs,” he said, adding that the training cost, together with an allowance of RM2,000 a month, will be borne by MTC.

Mazli Zakuan's speech was read by MTC Board of Trustees member Datuk Ahmad Nadzarudin Abdul Razak, who represented him at the event.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Noraini Ahmad said the EPIP programme aims to help the timber industry obtain engineers from the pool of local university graduates. At the same time, she added, it will give the students early exposure to job opportunities in the sector.

“As one of the country’s largest commodity sectors, the timber industry is no exception to adapting the latest technology to continue to progress in line with other industrial sectors,” said Noraini, who was also at the launch.

She said records show that Malaysia was the biggest exporter of plywood last year; the sixth largest for wooden furniture and wooden frames; the eighth largest for mouldings; and the 10th largest for sawdust.

“In fact, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the export value of the timber industry still showed a significant contribution for 2020 amounting to RM22.02bil,” she said, adding that the sector has provided 50,000 locals with jobs.

“The involvement of engineers in the carpentry industry is very important through their expertise and use of technology in improving operational efficiency and product innovation,” she said.

Noraini added that the programme is timely to strengthen human capital to face the uncertainty of future challenges, especially in the timber sector.

Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Dr Mohd Khairuddin Aman Razak, who also launched the programme, said he hopes a similar initiative will be offered to other sectors such as palm oil and rubber.

He added that MTC will be taking in 80 candidates this year.

It is hoped that those in the programme will go on to contribute to the nation’s economy, and reduce dependence on foreign labour, he said.

At the same event, MTC signed a memorandum of understanding with eight universities and six timber industry associations to carry out the programmes.

The universities are Universiti Putra Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, Universiti Kuala Lumpur, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Universiti Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia – together with the Polytechnic Education Department.

The associations are the Malaysian Wood Industries Association, the Timber Exporters’ Association of Malaysia, the Malaysia Pallet Association, the Malaysian Molding & Mortise Council, the Malaysian Furniture Council, and the Malaysian Bumiputra Timber and Furniture Entrepreneurs Association.

