

# Timber industry seeks local grads to join in its march towards IR 4.0

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PUTRAJAYA: The timber industry is on the lookout for more local graduates as it moves into the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or IR 4.0.

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

He said this was part of the MTC's strategic plan which includes intensifying efforts to achieve digitisation and automation in the industry as it enters IR 4.0.

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

Mazli Zakuan said the engineer placement programme was offered to engineers to undergo workplace training under professional guidance for a year.

As for the internship, he said it was open to all undergraduates who would undergo their industrial training.

"It will be for a maximum of six months, with the training provided based on the timber industry's needs.

"The training cost together with an allowance of RM2,000 a month would be borne by MTC," he said in his speech which was read by MTC Board of Trustees member Datuk Ahmad Nadzarudin Abdul Razak.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Noraini Ahmad said the programme aims to help the timber industry obtain engineers from the pool of local university graduates.

At the same time, she added, it would give students early exposure to the job opportunities available in the sector.

"As one of the country's largest commodity sectors, the timber industry is no exception in adapting the latest technology to continue to progress in line with other industrial sectors," she said.

Noraini said 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 the expertise and use of technology in improving operational efficiency and product innovation," she said.

Noraini added that the programme was 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 Razali, who launched the programme, said he hopes a similar programme would be offered to other sectors such as palm oil and rubber.

He added that MTC would be taking 80 candidates this year and hoped those chosen would go on to contribute to the nation's economy.

At the same event, MTC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with eight universities and six timber industry associations to conduct the placement 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, Malaysia Pallet Association, Malaysian Molding & Mortise Council, Malaysian Furniture Council and the Malaysian Bumiputra Timber and Furniture Entrepreneurs Association.

Timber industry , Malaysian Timber Council , Mazli Zakuan Mohd Noor , Engineer Placement and Internship Placement in the Industry 2021 programme , engineers , interns

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