

In a bind over 'funds'

> Employers upset over HRDF runaround on balance of money for staff training

BY V. RAGANANTHINI
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) is in a pickle.

First, it said that unused monies from the iMalaysia Globally Recognised Industry and Professional Certification (iMalaysiaGRIP) would be channelled into a consolidated fund.

But in an about-turn, HRDF now claims that the entire unused sum of about RM71 million has been put into a HRDF pool fund.

The pool fund, according to HRDF, will be used for five other training programmes, which it claims will benefit "approximately 36 associations in Malaysia". To aggravate the already pent-up anger among employers, it has subsequently claimed that all funds for the programme have been fully utilised.

In an earlier circular dated Dec 22 last year, HRDF chief executive C.M. Vignaesvaran said as of Dec 31, RM86.3 million was taken from employers' contributions and allocated for the iMalaysiaGRIP

programme.

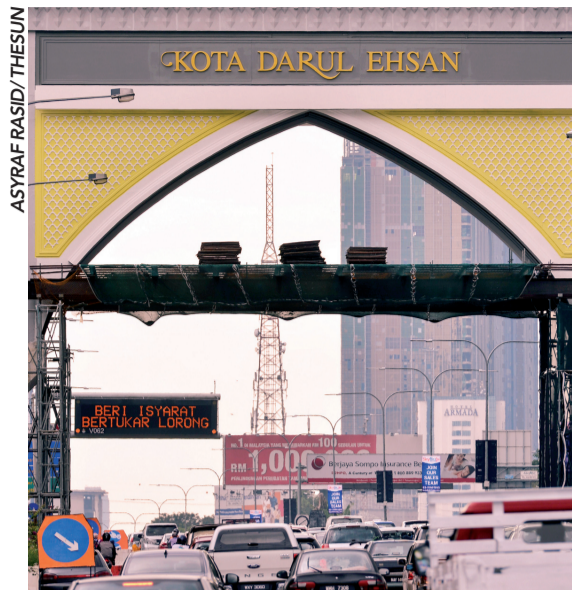
Until last month, the sum had exceeded RM100 million in contributions from employers, with an additional RM100 million from the government, HRDF said in its latest circular.

Vignaesvaran had said only RM15.2 million was utilised to upgrade the skills of 19,000 workers, leaving about RM71 million, which he said would be put into a consolidated fund.

The programme was ordered to be ceased by the government in September after protests from employers, who claimed that their contributions were being misused.

Employers are now demanding that HRDF account for the money instead of saying that full utilisation has resulted in no remaining funds.

HRDF in a statement yesterday in response to queries from *theSun* claimed it had notified employers about the phasing out of the iMalaysiaGRIP programme and that the remaining funds will be channelled into a pool fund, instead of returning it to employers' individual accounts.



BEFORE: Construction materials on the beam, posing a danger to motorists.



AFTER: The beam cleared of the construction materials.

'Dangerous' materials removed

BY ASHWIN KUMAR
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) acted promptly to remove flimsy scaffolding and other construction materials from a steel beam at the Kota Darul Ehsan Arch on the Federal Highway.

On Nov 8, *theSun* spotted the danger posed by these materials hanging just about 10m from the ground at the renovation site of the arch.

Realising that it would pose a

hazard to motorists, *theSun* notified DOSH.

DOSH deputy director-general Omar Mat Piah said personnel from Selangor DOSH would be deployed to the scene and a notice of prohibition would be issued if the contractors concerned failed to adhere to existing safety regulations.

"Selangor DOSH officers visited the site and the main contractor will be called to our office to discuss the safety aspects," he said when contacted.

Omar also said that in an effort to make sure the site is

safe, Selangor DOSH issued a notice of prohibition.

"However, we would like to stress that the main contractors should be responsible. They should be more stringent in monitoring safety and adhering to the regulations. We (DOSH personnel) cannot be at the scene all the time," he said.

He added that when motorists and the public see big, heavy construction concrete blocks hanging over public areas, it can cause anxiety. Thus, it is the main contractor's responsibility to adhere to the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (Osha Act).

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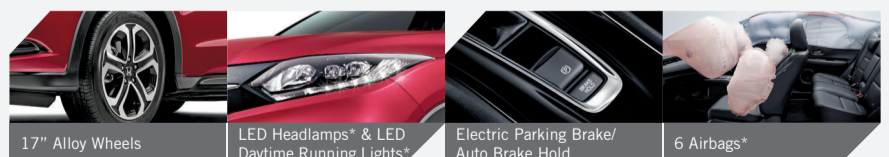


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