

Scholars lead new Energy Ministry programme

By Asha Javeed

IN A bid to address the under-employment in the energy sector, the Ministry of Energy has enlisted 40 former island scholarship winners to engage in a mentorship programme at the Ministry of Energy.

Energy Minister Franklin Khan said it was Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley's vision to create a cadre of energy professionals.

Khan explained that the work of the technical and professional staff of the Ministry of Energy is specialised, which means the ministry cannot not look to the wider public service for the recruitment of professional staff.

In addition, the ministry has to compete with the international oil companies in compensation for staff.

He observed that between 1998 and 2004, only two members of staff resigned from the Ministry of Energy.

"However from 2005 to present there has been a constant stream of resignations with the principal reason being the disparity in compensation between the MEEI and the rest of the energy sector. As at December 2018, a further 56 officers had resigned to take up better-paying energy-sector positions. This exodus of officers has not been limited to permanent staff as the ministry also lost contract officers to the energy sector over the same period," he said at the launch of the programme at the Hyatt yesterday.

Khan said the country's reputation as a location with the requisite skilled human resources is being slowly eroded by industry employment practices where services are contracted or relocated abroad.

"Consequently, employment in the sector has seen a steep drop of 33 per cent over the last five years, that is from 21,700 in 2014 to 14,600 persons in 2019. Evidence of this under-employment by the industry became apparent when the ministry invited applications for entry level technical positions and was overwhelmed by the deluge of applications," he said.

The initial programme will comprise 40 graduates.

The ministry identified 27 graduates with the requisite qualification within its current employ while the Scholarship Division of the Ministry of Education identified 13 candidates to achieve the complement of 40 participants.

"Of the 40 mentees, 30 are island scholars and the rest have First Class Honours in their respective professions. The skills include geoscience, geophysics, petroleum engineering, chemical and process engineering, mechanical engineering and information technology," said Khan.

The Mentorship Programmes comprises three Tiers spread over a period of five years. The entry level, Tier 1, is for graduates with first class honours or national scholarship recipients with no experience and runs for one year. Tier 2 is for graduates with first class honours or national scholarship recipients, with two years' experience and is for a period of two years. Tier 3 is for graduates with first class honours or a distinction at the master's level, with two years' experience and is for a period two years.

On the expiration of Tier 3, the energy professionals will have an opportunity to apply for available vacant positions in the ministry.

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