

FDI: Federal govt must work with local agencies
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The recent statement by Japanese ambassador Masahiko Horie should serve as a wake-up call to the federal government that it is time to address the issues that revolve around human resources constraints and power supply for the manufacturing industries in Malaysia.

He mentioned last week that these two elements would weigh heavily on FDI and Malaysia may lose its advantage to other countries around the region. I don't think anyone expected the ambassador to be so direct in his comments.

I am sure he has his reasons because 1,200 Japanese companies are located in Malaysia. In fact, the ambassador couldn't have found a perfect place to make this statement – Penang. About 120 Japanese companies are located here in Penang.

As a Penangite, I feel it is important that the federal government take a proactive step in engaging all local government agencies to look into the issues brought up. Issues of such should be seen as steps taken to reach out to the needs of investors rather than being driven by political differences.

Also, federal agencies such as the Immigration Department should start working together with the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) to further streamline the application process for the human resource needs in the industry.

In fact, local state agencies in Penang such as InvestPenang and the Penang Development Corporation have always worked hand-in-hand with Mida to address investor needs.

I believe that the federal agencies should shed their myopic views about not participating in attracting investments into the country. Instead, these agencies should emulate Mida's role and understand better what investors want. It's also high time that the Human Resources Ministry start to work closely with the Penang government to address the shortages of labour in the industry.

The ministry should emulate what has been done with the CAT (Career Assistance and Training) Centre set up by the Penang government to really gauge what happens on the ground.

As a Penangite, it is appalling to read criticisms about how ineffective and inexperienced the Penang government is on issues of attracting and sustaining investments. All this mudslinging must stop.

With the statement made by the Japanese ambassador recently, I suggest detractors of the Penang government start asking whether they have been all this while been misled by various quarters to only focus on attacking the Penang government.

It is high time they reach out and volunteer their time and ideas to the federal and state governments. After all, we are one nation with diverse views but of the same agenda, aren't we?

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