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PM lauds more working women

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GENDER EQUALITY:
Firms boosting
women's
participation
in workforce

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MORE Malaysian companies are answering the government's call to increase women's participation in the workforce.

In commending these companies, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said that PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was first among the Big Four accounting firms to provide 90 days' maternity leave for its female employees.

In a blog post yesterday, Najib wrote that aside from PwC, which

was playing a positive role in empowering women, the Sunway Group had 26 per cent female participation in its senior management.

CIMB, he said, had also been making strides with its staff rejuvenation programme.

"I have long been an advocate of gender diversity and family-friendly policies, and with the advancement of technology, it is now easier than ever to make this a norm in our workforce, of giving employees the flexibility, not just to attend to their personal needs, but to also rejuvenate their minds," he said.

Najib said as the nation marched towards 2020, he wanted to encourage the private sector to embrace family-friendly policies and gender diversity in their workforce.

On Monday, he met representatives of women in the workforce at a dialogue session organised by Talent Corporation Malaysia (TalentCorp) here.

The meeting, held at his office,

was to enable Najib to listen to the opinions and views of representatives of women who returned to work under the career comeback programme.

Najib, who spoke to several representatives and listened to their stories, said it was heartening to know that Malaysian companies were doing their part to include women in their workforce.

The initiative, he said, had allowed talented career women, such as Anna Marina Chen, whom he spoke to at the discussion, to return to the workforce without compromising her commitment to her family.

"Anna had put her career on hold for 16 months to care for her daughter after facing numerous challenges in getting the right caregiver, but was able to rejoin her former company, UEM Sunrise Bhd, due to its flexible working arrangement," Najib said.

He added that the story of Chong Chye Neo was another that inspired him.

Chong, he said, had taken a long leave of absence not once, but twice, to care for her children, and had, on both times been able to return to IBM without having her position or salary compromised.

IBM, he wrote, had been exemplary in allowing talented career women, such as Chong, to have flexible working arrangements, and that it had proven to be a worthwhile investment, as she became the first woman to take on the role as managing director of IBM Malaysia.

"Examples such as these are inspiring. They are living proof that companies and employees stand to benefit from flexible working arrangements.

"TalentCorp's role in the recruitment and retention of women in corporate Malaysia through the career comeback programme and the flexWorkLife.my initiative is indeed commendable," the prime minister said.

At the same time, he also congratulated corporations, such as

BASF Asia Pacific Service Centre, CIMB Group, IBM Malaysia, IHS Global, Intel, PwC Malaysia, Sunway and UEM Group, who were leading Corporate Malaysia in embracing diversity and inclusiveness.

According to Bursa Malaysia, the Female Labour Participation Rate is at 54.1 per cent, which translates to about 700,000 women in the labour force.

Women hold 26.3 per cent of top management positions as of last year.

Najib said these were the results of the introduction of various initiatives to support and unlock the economic potential in women.

In achieving developed economic status, he said: "We must ensure that all segments of society feel that they, too, belong to this.

"Not just women, but also the Bottom 40 (B40) of our society. It is only then that our economic advancements will have a real meaning to it. No one must be left behind."