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# 'Vital to raise skills level'

Najib: M'sians need to be empowered to ensure growth

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in London



**LONDON:** There is an urgent need to raise the level of education and skills in the country for higher productivity and wages as well as reduce dependence on foreign labour, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said Malaysians need to be "empowered" by the right skills and aptitude to adapt to a challenging investment landscape.

"We have to reduce our dependence on cheap foreign labour. We need to be serious about raising the level of education and skills in our country, so that growth and higher wages come from increases in productivity," he said in his keynote address at the GSIAC-Khazanah Distinguished Lecture Series here yesterday.

Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council (GSIAC) was set up to boost Malaysia's efforts in science and innovation, using science to help advance the "high income economy" agenda in Malaysia.

Chaired by the Prime Minister, it comprises global industry leaders from cutting-edge fields, prominent academicians, with Malaysian corporate leaders and officials from key ministries.

The sixth annual meeting was held yesterday in London for the first time, after five years in New York. Prof Alice Gast, president of Imperial College London, also spoke at the event.

For Malaysia to compete with the best, regionally and globally, Najib said: "We need the transformative power of science and technology, and we need the dynamism of entrepreneurs, innovation and cre-



**Rapt attention:** Najib giving his keynote address during a luncheon at the GSIAC-Khazanah Distinguished Lecture Series in London. — Bernama

ativity to propel both public and private-sector performance."

Hence the implementation of the Science 2 Action, or S2A, an initiative in 2013 to intensify the application of science and technology for the development of industry.

"We want to reinvigorate all aspects of science in Malaysia so that it contributes to generating new ideas and strategies that will create sustainable wealth and jobs for our people. We need to focus not just on innovation, but on commercialising innovation.

"And we need a focus on being at

the forefront of using – and inventing – new technology, so that we gain and maintain a long-term competitive edge," said Najib.

Part of the S2A initiative was the Newton-Ungku Omar Fund, a joint initiative between the Malaysian and British governments, which has created new opportunities for scientists from both countries to work together on potentially life-changing research and innovation initiatives.

Seven main collaborative programmes have been established – in the areas of human capital develop-

ment, research and development and marketing of research outputs from the laboratory.

He added that the private sector must play its part, including in training at all stages of life while the Government would continue to support.

"Researcher Links and Institutional Links programmes have already started building strong network linkages between Malaysia and the United Kingdom. We look forward to further developments and successes from this far-sighted partnership," said Najib.