

Experts: Use a targeted approach to stem brain drain

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PETALING JAYA: Economists have lauded Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's pledge to address the brain drain threat in the country, saying it will stimulate the economy.

Al-Medinah International University economist Prof Emeritus Dr Barjoyai Bardai said plans to get skilled Malaysians to return and contribute to the nation would improve the economy and make our workforce more competitive.

"Those who have worked abroad have the expertise, survival skills and discipline.

"However, the question is whether they would want to come back as their salaries, benefits and quality of life may drop," he said when contacted.

Human resources expert Usha Devi said the government should learn from past experiences in addressing the brain drain, and have a targeted approach on the type of talent it wants to bring back.

"I would suggest the government review the success or failure of past schemes and improve on them.

"Set a target by identifying the segments and industries that require these talents as there should be a match with market needs.

"If we lack software engineers or data scientists, then it will be a priority to bring back people in these fields," she said.

Asked how the government could attract overseas Malaysians to return and contribute to nation-building, Usha said competitive pay and benefit packages, along with career growth opportunities, are a must.

"These people should also be supported by some culture assimilation of our local way of working. Yes, they are Malaysians, but they may also get some 'culture shock' here," she added.

Sunway University economist Prof Yeah Kim Leng called on the government to set up another institution like Talent Corporation Malaysia, which had had limited success in attracting, nurturing and retaining the right expertise.

"Anwar's ability to reignite local and international investors' confidence put the country back on an even keel, and propelling the economy into a sustainable growth trajectory will also reduce the country's brain drain issues.

"There's hope that the restructuring and rebuilding strategies rolled out by the government in the last two months, if followed through with commitment and effective execution, could help close the gaps in income, wages, living standards and skills with developed nations, thereby reducing the talent out-migration," he added.

Prof Yeah said creating highly skilled and high-wage jobs as well as income-generating opportunities could be among strategies to attract Malaysian graduates and entrepreneurs into returning.

"The key driver is high-value technology and knowledge-intensive investments that need to be ramped up," he added.

On Sept 23, Anwar said the government is looking into ways to attract skilled Malaysians into returning and contributing to the country in a move to address the brain drain.