

PM: Government committed to developing local talent base
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today his administration was committed in nurturing and developing skilled local graduates, and stressed that a competitive talent base was crucial for a productive high income economy.

The Prime Minister told Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) graduates here that the government is "widening access" to the country's existing education system (pre-school, higher education) to ensure all Malaysians received opportunities for educational growth.

"Our willingness to invest in human capital development has held us in good stead as a nation. Human capital lies at the core of innovation and productive high income economy.

"No economy can success without a highly skilled talent base that responds creatively to economic changes, and is centred on creating, developing and utilising knowledge," he said today.

Najib (picture) lauded the previous government administration's decision to liberalise the country's higher education sector, and said the setting up of private universities, local branches of foreign campuses and twinning programmes was a right move as it gave local students the option of affordable tertiary education.

"Looking back at the decision with the benefit of hindsight, I would like to state that it was the right decision, it was a blue ocean strategy before the term was even coined and became popular in providing more places for Malaysians as local institutions cannot accomodate all the qualified students and not every Malaysian can afford the cost of an overseas education," Najib added.

Malaysia ranked 36th out of 60 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit's latest Global Talent Index in May which saw the United States placed as the top country in producing talent, while Singapore and Nordic nations were rated stellar performers.

The Global Talent Index (GTI) report for 2011 also projected Malaysia's ranking would fall marginally by three places to 39th out of 60 countries by 2015, reflecting the country's struggle with brain drain and retaining talent.

The World Bank's report on the country's brain drain showed that the number of Malaysians with tertiary education who moved abroad tripled in the last two decades. Two out of every 10 Malaysians with a tertiary education opted for either OECD countries or Singapore.

As of 2010, the World Bank estimated the Malaysian diaspora at about one million, of whom one-third were tertiary educated.

Economists have said Malaysia needs to ensure a greater degree of meritocracy in education and employment to tackle the fundamental causes of Malaysia's brain drain problem.

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