

**Keynote Speech “Empowering Malaysia’s Workforce, Nurturing Talent for The Future”:  
Roundtable with International Business Chambers**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Good morning. It is indeed a pleasure to be here today. Thank you for inviting and providing me the opportunity to meet with esteemed members of the business chambers.

2. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Human Resource and TalentCorp for their efforts in organising and coordinating this Roundtable Session today.

3. I am sure this session will benefit all of us as it is aimed at highlighting and identifying areas that require the attention of both the business community and the Government. It should contribute further to Malaysia’s drive to become a preferred economic and trade investment destination internationally.

## MALAYSIA THE PREFERRED CHOICE FOR INVESTORS

4. In ensuring Malaysia remains a “preferred choice” for foreign investors, we are mindful of the need to provide a conducive environment to encourage the inflow of foreign capital and technology, as well as to strengthen the competitiveness of Malaysia’s industries in global market.

5. There have been a lot of narratives centering on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), artificial intelligence (AI), innovation, automation, Internet of Things (IOT) and other technological advancement and how all these are expected to impact all industries. We may also say with certainty that Industry 4.0 will change the kinds of jobs needed across all market sectors. It is important to note, however, that while change and disruption are the new normal, talent and their developmental needs continue to be vital.

6. As I shared at the Beyond Paradigm Summit 2019 recently: “The focus on Industry 4.0 shouldn’t be solely on its technological growth, but on the people it touches.” And according to the WEF, while some emerging roles will gain significantly in importance over the coming years, millions of jobs are set to become redundant. For that reason, I call on you as representatives of the business community to help drive competitiveness and innovation in order to create jobs of the future here in Malaysia.

7. There is much to be done to ensure our human capital possesses the right skills to value- add and do the creative, empathetic and interactive in a technology-driven landscape. It

is also essential for the public and private sectors to work closer together to drive the development of an Industry 4.0 ecosystem in Malaysia, one which enables us to fully optimise all our sources of talent, be they local graduates, the Malaysian diaspora, skilled foreign talents, or our insufficiently leveraged pool of latent talent.

8. Today's dialogue is the first of what is hoped to be a series of engagements between the new Government and the foreign business community. The dialogue's theme, "Empowering Malaysia's Workforce, Nurturing Talent for the Future" reflects our aspiration to nurture and develop highly skilled, knowledgeable and innovative human capital to meet the needs of industry, both now and in the future.

## REFORMS FOR MALAYSIA'S WORKFORCE

9. The theme of today's dialogue also re-affirms the four priority areas highlighted during the Mid-Term Review of the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) which was presented last year, namely: reforming the labour market; improving labour efficiency and productivity; enhancing access to quality education and training; and fostering stronger industry- academia linkages.

10. These reforms are crucial, not only in developing human capital to support our future economic growth but also in addressing job mismatches which contribute to graduate underemployment, unemployment, and slow wage growth as well as over-dependence on foreign labour. All these have serious implications for the economy and for businesses. Do note that the Government will be reviewing labour laws to improve the labour market, ensure greater transparency, and further safeguard the welfare of workers.

11. Under the first priority area of reforming the labour market, four strategies are proposed

- generating skilled jobs, raising salaries and wages, enhancing management of migrant workers and improving labour market conditions.

12. The second priority area, improving labour efficiency and productivity, two strategies are to be implemented – strengthening the rights of workers and increasing female labour force participation. In this aspect, TalentCorp has been steadily supporting our national aspiration to achieve a 59 percent female labour force participation rate by 2020 through initiatives like the Career Comeback Programme which received acclaim at the 2016 Global Summit of Women in Warsaw, Poland. Furthermore, the Government is committed to streamline and simplify expatriate services as an enabler to transform Malaysia into a preferred country for investment and top talent.

13. Under the third priority area of enhancing access to quality education and training, three strategies will be undertaken: firstly, to raise the quality of education; secondly to prioritise quality over quantity for technical and

vocational education and training (TVET) and thirdly, to improve education for all. As I highlighted in the 2019 TVET Conference recently, TVET will be the game-changer in addressing industry's needs for knowledgeable human capital capable of boosting Malaysia's competitiveness globally.

14. The final priority area of fostering stronger industry-academia linkages two strategies are outlined: one is to develop industry-relevant skills and the other to promote contributions of society and industry. We have several initiatives in this space which are aimed at empowering the quality of Malaysia's talent pool, including the Structured Internship Programme (SIP) which is spearheaded by TalentCorp together with the

Ministry of Education (MOE); and the Graduates Enhancement Programme for Employability (GENERATE 2.0) under the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF).

15. However, all these initiatives and strategies will not achieve positive results if our workforce does not have the passion for the tasks and jobs they are entrusted with. If they are passionate and able to dispense their tasks well, better wages and emoluments will come along naturally.

## CONCLUSION

16. On our journey to being a high-income nation, we have collectively worked to identify our challenges and formulate a clear plan of action.

However, in order to achieve our ambitious reform agenda, the Government of Malaysia well recognises that all parties, including private-sector employers and foreign business communities, have an important stake in this process.

17. Prior to today, all the foreign chambers here have been asked to provide input on some of the challenges your members have faced or continue to face in conducting their operations and business activities here in Malaysia. I look forward to hearing your views on potential areas of improvement, as well as how we can foster greater collaboration and understanding for Malaysia's continued progress.

18. On this note, and without further delay, allow me to give the floor to the moderator of this dialogue. Thank you, and I wish you all a fruitful and meaningful session that will benefit all of us.

Thank you.

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