

# Malaysians with global exposure asset to nation



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**KUALA LUMPUR** — Malaysians leaving the country to work abroad should not be a concern as most of them will come back and bring benefits to the country.

World Bank lead economist Truman Packard said people who work abroad gain international experience, and many studies have shown that countries reap huge benefits when a significant group of their nationals come back with international experience.

"They bring with them new technology, new ideas about doing things, new ideas for niche business that didn't exist before, better or more demanding expectations of their governments and regulatory bodies in terms of making it easier to do business.

"Those are some of the things that people can only really learn from experience abroad that they tend to bring back for the benefit of their country," he said.

He believes the key to attracting Malaysian talents abroad back into the country is to create a welcoming environment.

Packard spoke to the media after the launch of World Bank's report, "Improving the Effectiveness of TalentCorp's Initiatives" on June 26.

The report concluded that Talent Corporation Malaysia Bhd's Returning Expert Programme (REP) and Residence Pass-Talent (RP-T) initiatives are effective in attracting and retaining talent with needed skills, and recommended changes to both REP and RP-T to improve effectiveness going forward.

It highlighted that the REP is effective in attracting people with the skills that Malaysia needs and

is most effective for individuals who already have a job in Malaysia when they apply, as they were 40% more likely to return as a result of the REP incentives.

"The common refrain among employers is that they are missing a number of key skills, not just the technical skills.

"Mainly what was missing seems to be the soft skills, things like working well in teams, leadership, persistence, and many employers also reported a lack of capacity in language," said Packard.

The programme was found to offer positive monetary value rather than a cost to Malaysia, with net fiscal benefits estimated at RM27,000 per returned applicant.

"What we like about this programme is that it does a good job of assessing what abilities employers are looking for. So it is not enough to just have a degree, it is import-

ant to have experience abroad.

"In addition to the fiscal surplus, you have the benefit of having these skilled, internationally experienced people back in Malaysia and that has external effects that should benefit other parts of the labour market and industry.

The report also showed that Malaysians living in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have grown from 121,000 in 1990 to 171,000 in 2000 and 311,000 in 2010.

Career opportunities was the most cited reason for migrating abroad, based on the feedback of 72% of the survey respondents.

The highest number of Malaysians is in Australia, totalling 116,193, followed by UK and US with 69,938 and 61,765 respectively.

Its recommendations include focusing on connecting Malaysians abroad to job opportunities, con-

tinuously reviewing and refining eligibility criteria to better align them with skillsets in shortage in Malaysia, revising the RP-T eligibility to allow for expatriates and to better meet the needs of applicants' families.

"It seems like the programme is the last incentive pull that they need in order to come and fill that skill gap in the Malaysian economy, and if it became policy I think you would see an impact on all Malaysian diaspora.

"There are other reasons besides fiscal incentives that cause people to want to come home, and I think having the sort of environment that is welcoming of people who have been abroad encourages that movement, not only back in but out as well, and I believe that is the right approach for any middle-income country seeking high-income status," said Packard.