

# Nurturing young talents for the future

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**M**ALAYSIA is now preparing to become a high income nation. The government has developed the New Economic Model (NEM) as its plan to achieve this goal. There are three elements under the NEM: Malaysia must become a high income nation; the country must have an economic model that is inclusive covering a wide spectrum of communities and all levels of society; and we must ensure that the economic model is sustainable — that means it is environmentally friendly and incorporates ethical and social responsibility, as well as good values.

One of the challenges we face in achieving our aim of becoming a high income nation is lining up the experts who will be at the forefront of efforts to drive the economy to the next level. If you want to leapfrog your output to a higher level, your manpower must have a superior level of productivity and efficiency. That means our pool of human capital must be highly competent, skillful, and knowledgeable.

However, getting such highly qualified people takes time. It is something we have to plan ahead and prepare for. And this task is all the more daunting in the 21st century as the younger generation have a different mindset, perspective and values. Nevertheless, it is something we need to address to ensure that the nation will have a reasonable number of people with the right competencies to run various organisations, whether public or private, in 10 to 15 years time.



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example, let's say we work from 9-5 and you give the younger generation an assignment. If they complete the task by 3pm, they expect to be done for the day. It doesn't occur to them to get a head start on tomorrow's assignment. Now, how do we deal with this kind of mindset?

The younger generation behave this way because they have not had to struggle for what they want. They are not confronted with major challenges in their daily lives. In the 1960s, people worked hard because they realised we had just come out of a war 15 years earlier. So, they were still trying to pick up the pieces and rebuild the nation and its society.

Today, the society is already there. And everybody is doing what they like to do and things are not as difficult for them. So, if they are confronted with a problem, they have problems coming up with a solution.

If we do not address this lackadaisical attitude among the young now, we will get more incidents like the cat hotel case that was all over the news recently. How can you run a cat hotel and then go off on a holiday without making plans for the cats to be taken care of? You operate a business to take care of people's cats while they are away and instead you go away!

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I have spoken to a few Malaysian CEOs of large and medium companies who complained that the younger generation are not performing well in the workplace. This is alarming and if we want to make that leap into becoming a high income nation, we must prepare the younger generation to cope with the next level of development.

So, now our challenge is: how do we get the people in the 25 to 30 age group prepared for the next 10 years? How can we prepare them so that they will become more resilient and confident enough to deal with any forthcoming uncertainties? The biggest challenge not only for universities, but also all employers, is the personal development of our young talents.

We know that the younger generation has a different way of looking at things. For

For the young, it is more important to get things done than getting things done right. We need to change this mindset. It is very important that we look at how we can nurture our young talents so that they will be psychologically, sociologically, and anthropologically ready for the nation's next level of growth.

In order to take up the mantle of leadership in the future, they must be able to think, make decisions, and have a sense of responsibility. We must find a way to equip them with the right skills and competencies, and inculcate good values in them, so that we can achieve our aim of becoming a high income nation that is inclusive and sustainable.

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