Malaysia's future at risk as graduates leave

MALAYSIA is facing a challenge that requires urgent attention as more graduates choose to pursue careers in other countries. Many are attracted by higher salaries, clearer career paths, and more supportive work cultures abroad.

While such choices are understandable, this steady movement of talent out of the country is creating shortages at home and slowing the nation's progress.

Graduates in engineering, healthcare, digital technology, and skilled trades often find that overseas opportunities provide faster recognition, better training, and greater financial stability.

For them, international exposure promises not only professional growth but also personal development. This makes the decision to leave increasingly compelling, while local employers are left at a disadvantage in retaining individuals who could strengthen industries and drive innovation.

The impact within Malaysia is already becoming clear. Manufacturing firms report difficulties in filling technical roles, hospitals struggle with shortages of doctors and nurses, and digital companies are losing valuable expertise needed to remain competitive.


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Small and medium enterprises, which form the backbone of the economy, face the greatest challenge because they cannot compete with the financial packages and structured career opportunities offered abroad.

When too many graduates decide not to remain in the country, industries slow down, innovation declines, and national competitiveness is weakened.

The consequences are not only economic but also social. Families may celebrate the achievements of children who succeed overseas, yet many, I'm sure, quietly wish that these successes could contribute more directly to the nation. Communities feel the absence of young professionals who might otherwise become leaders, mentors, and role models. At the national level, the outflow of talent reduces the ability to achieve long-term aspirations of becoming a high-income, innovation-driven economy.

It is important to recognise that the international experience can be beneficial when graduates return. Those who come back often enrich local industries with new knowledge and perspectives. However, the reality is that many do not return, which creates a long-term imbalance. Malaysia invests heavily in education, yet the benefits of this investment increasingly flow to other economies rather than strengthening its own growth.

The responsibility to address this challenge must be shared by all stakeholders.

Employers need to create workplaces that reward talent fairly, offer clear opportunities for advancement, and provide supportive environments.

Universities should strengthen collaboration with industries so that graduates can see meaningful career pathways at home.

Government policies must also enhance the appeal of local careers by improving wages in critical sectors, supporting companies in their retention efforts, and ensuring professional development remains accessible to all.

Malaysia should not prevent graduates from exploring opportunities abroad because global mobility is part of today's economy. The priority must be to ensure that staying is just as rewarding as leaving. Retaining graduates will strengthen industries, support families, and drive national progress.

The future of Malaysia will depend not only on the number of graduates produced but also on how many dedicate their knowledge, creativity, and determination to building the nation with pride, resilience, and unwavering commitment.

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