

## KERATAN AKHBAR

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### High economic growth needed to address skills gap, says Rafizi



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia must maintain high economic growth to create more quality jobs so the country can address its skills gap, says economy minister Rafizi Ramli.

He described the challenge as “the most defining of our era”.

Rafizi said his ministry has “never shifted its attention from the importance of aggregate demand, business creation, innovation, and selecting high growth, high value industries in which to invest”.

“Whatever version of the future of work looks like, it will only be optimistic if there is an engine of growth that creates high-skilled jobs.

“Economic growth is, therefore, a hygiene factor – a fundamental necessity – for this ministry,” he said at the launch of the Deloitte South East Asia (SEA) Regional Capability Centre here today.

He said “retraining and workforce development must also be increased to a scale never seen before”.

Citing the latest estimates by the World Bank on the talent gap, Rafizi noted that “for us to match developed OECD countries for skills, we need to create another two million high-skilled jobs”.

“This is a global challenge with which many countries are still grappling,” he said.

“In the next few months, we will be rolling out a series of initiatives to ease access to upskilling programmes, so that we will tilt the supply-demand imbalance.”

He also said creating a supportive environment for labour mobility was necessary to place the right talents in the right jobs.

Talent planning must be active and deliberate, he said, and Malaysia must adapt and challenge assumptions about what makes a good worker.

“Taking a skills-first approach, and enabling our talents to serve the region will address the structural problems of our economy as we move up the value chain,” he said.