

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN  
TARIKH: 7 SEPTEMBER 2016 (RABU)**

<b>Bil</b>	<b>Tajuk</b>	<b>Akhbar</b>
1.	New era needs 'STEM' brains	New Straits Times
2.	Build sustainable peace by providing opportunities to people, says MB	New Straits Times
3.	Vision for 60% skilled workers by 2020 still dim	The Star
4.	Drop in STEM talents raises government concern	The Sun
5.	Kaedah IBSE pikat pelajar minat STEM	Berita Harian
6.	Penjelajahan Angkasa Space Pod	Kosmo
7.	Angkasa sasar tarik 180,000 pengunjung setahun	Kosmo
8.	Mohd Azanuddin Pengarah Urusan SIRIM QAS International	Utusan Malaysia
9.	Ubat tiruan RM3.51j dirampas	Utusan Malaysia
10.	244 laman web ubat ragu disiasat	Harian Metro
11.	Tak sesuai kerja 6 jam	Utusan Malaysia

# New era needs 'STEM' brains

**SHORTFALL:** Science, technology, engineering, mathematics talent needed to prosper, says minister

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**M**ALAYSIA'S talents in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are declining and far behind the Vision 2020 target of 60 per cent skilled workers in the country, said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Madius Tangau.

He said, as of last year, Malaysia had only 28 per cent skilled workers but a 10 per cent brain drain.

"Developed countries which implemented Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) are reaping the fruits of STI now while we are struggling to meet the set target.

"We need to ensure that we develop the much-needed STEM talent today for the future," he said during the keynote address at the Pangkor International Development Dialogue (Pangkor Dialogue) 2016 here, yesterday.

He said STEM-related careers yielded a 12 per cent increase in the monthly household income of RM6,141 in 2014 compared with RM4,025 in 2009.

Tangau said the country was caught "playing catch-up" where students were being taught skills for current needs, but not those that would meet future market needs.

There is a need to realise that the concept of traditional education was becoming irrelevant as technologies evolved at a rapid pace.

"We must have the foresight to develop our talents effectively to ensure future competitiveness. Lifelong learning is now a necessity rather than a choice, and employees will need constant upskilling, reskilling and specialisation."

Tangau said that to prosper in the new era, having the right number of STEM talent was

not enough. He told the delegates that they must inspire the youth to become problem-solvers instead of followers, and nurture them on the path to becoming job creators and not just job seekers. This was critical for them to lead the revolution in the country as it had to anchor on STEM.

"The inaugural National Science Council meeting, chaired by Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Najib Razak), has entrusted my ministry to work with the Higher Education Ministry and the Education Ministry to develop a National STEM Action Plan. Together, we must develop our talents by design, and not by chance. To ensure we do not get lost in the trail of followers, the right quality and quantity of talent must be engaged, developed and deployed effectively."

Tangau later said policy implementors must look at figures at all levels to achieve the 60 per cent target in less than four years.

"The National STEM Action Plan is not done yet. We have to monitor what it is that prevents students from taking to STEM. Having enough STEM talent is important and the situation now is critical because STEM talents are become fewer. This is worrying."

To boost the STEM talent pool, he said, it should be made more attractive by adopting the Inquiry-Based Science Education approach in the teaching and learning of Science.

"I have seen how it is done in Japan, South Korea and the United States. We have to be strategic in what we do and which sectors to focus on. We have to prepare now and see how we can implement (the plan). We hope to complete it soon."

He said the Pangkor Dialogue was a great platform for thinkers to come together and share ideas on creativity and innovation.



**PANGKOR  
DIALOGUE**  
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**KERATAN AKHBAR**  
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**Build sustainable peace by providing opportunities to people, says MB**

**IPOH:** The only way to build sustainable peace is to provide opportunities to the people, said Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri

Dr Zambry Abd Kadir.

He said that was the reason and aim of the three-day Pangkor International Development Dialogue (Pangkor Dialogue) here.

"We traversed the world over the last two days.

"When I first mooted the Pangkor Dialogue four years ago, there were doubts and scepticism.

"The idea of an international conference being held by a state government was unheard of and had never been done before.

"But in the true fighting spirit that the Perakians have, we persevered and challenged ourselves to create the unthinkable and the inconceivable.

"The only way to build sustainable peace is through providing opportunities for the people. A fighting chance, an opening," he

said when closing the programme here yesterday.

Zambry said keynote speakers had pointed out ideas he hoped the delegates could apply in their respective countries.

He said progress should be pursued on multiple fronts and the state capital of Perak had adopted social business that would be marketed as its brand.

"(Nobel Laureate) Professor Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh believes that at the micro-level, social business will affect change, even if one inspires two individuals at a time to be economically productive.

"Going forward, Muhammad foresees people in the years 2030 to 2040 being baffled by the term 'unemployment'," Zambry said.

In his quest to end over reliance on jobs, he said Muhammad believed that business

was the overwhelming occupation, since a salaried job was not the sort that would enhance one's dignity.

"That is an exciting point of view and this has been seconded by Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Madius Tangau," he said.

Zambry said the delegates should support Muhammad, while advocating and pursuing varied wealth creation models to narrow inequality.

"May our discussions, opinions and our intentions continue to be progressive for many years to come.

"May we witness the fruits of our ideas throughout this conference become sustainable resilient reality," said Zambry, who also thanked the participants for sharing their ideas throughout the programme.

## Vision for 60% skilled workers by 2020 still dim

IPOH: Malaysia is still far from achieving Vision 2020's target of having enough science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) high skilled workers in the country.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Madius Tangau said the target was for 60% of the country's workforce to comprise of highly skilled workers by 2020.

As of last year the figure was only 28%.

Madius, who announced the numbers in his keynote speech at the Pangkor Dialogue at Casuarina Meru, expressed his concern over the matter but was hopeful that the target of 60% could be achieved by 2020.

At a media conference later, Madius said a report by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia revealed that only 21% of students were eligible to take up STEM related courses.

"We need to make science an interesting and creative subject. Some countries have implemented inquiry-based learning and it improved students' capabilities when it comes to STEM related subjects," he said.

Inquiry-based learning involves posing questions, problems or scenarios rather than simply presenting established facts.

Madius said inquiry-based learning had been tested successfully in several schools in Kuala Lumpur, and the Government was looking at

the possibility of implementing it nationwide.

He said the National Science Council chaired by the Prime Minister had also entrusted his ministry to work with the Higher Education ministry and Education ministry to develop a STEM action plan.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan expressed confidence that the 11th Malaysia Plan will lift the country towards becoming a high-income economy.

Addressing the Pangkor International Development Dialogue gala night on Monday, Abdul Rahman said the Government will ensure that the country's economy

expands at an average of 5% a year and that the fiscal deficit is cut from 3.2% in 2015 to less than 1% in 2020.

"We aspire to strengthen our labour productivity from RM77,100 in 2015 to RM92,300 in 2020.

"Increased productivity must be rewarded appropriately, so we aim to raise the share of employees' compensation to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 34.9% in 2015 to at least 40% in 2020," he added.

At the dinner, Bangladesh's Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus and Permodalan Nasional Bhd chief executive officer Tan Sri Hamad Kama Piah Che Othman were awarded the Pangkor Dialogue 2016 Lifetime Achievement Awards for their contributions to society.

