

## KERATAN AKHBAR

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### Strong TVET ecosystem vital in addressing foreign labour issue, says DPM

REDUCING DEPENDENCY

## Strong TVET ecosystem vital in addressing foreign labour issue, says DPM

**PUTRAJAYA:** A strong technical and vocational education and training (TVET) ecosystem in the plantation industry is vital to address its dependency on foreign workers.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said a strong TVET ecosystem allowed for a flexible labour market and contribute to the improvement of people's living standards.

"If we continue to depend heavily on foreign workers, it will affect the plantation industry, especially the palm oil sector, in the long term.

"As of Sept 30, 150,608 foreign workers are working in the plantation industry," he said in his speech during the Institute of Malaysian Plantation and Commodities (Impac) 8th convocation yesterday.

The plantation industries and commodities minister stressed the need for TVET programmes

to be strengthened.

"This can be done by improving its ecosystem with the stakeholders and improving the quality of its programmes through accreditation, recognition and certification by international bodies.

"These will allow the development of the country's agricommodities to be more competitive."

Fadillah said the TVET empowerment effort, which is the main focus of the ministry through Impac, could produce TVET graduates who are balanced, holistic, and entrepreneurial.

He said these would lead them to become highly skilled workers, who can contribute to the economy.

"In addition, the level of awareness of TVET programmes in the plantation industry needs to be increased among the youth, especially those from poor urban and rural households."



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, who is also plantation industries and commodities minister, addressing the media at a press conference in Putrajaya yesterday. PIC BY MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

To attract young people to participate in Impac's skills training programmes, he advised the centre to boost its promotional activities by widening its access to the public and provide training opportunities.

"I also urge all agencies under the ministry to continue to strengthen the high-impact research and development activities, as well as strengthen innovation and empower human capital development through the TVET agenda to add value to the industry."

Fadillah said the government strongly encouraged industry

players, including smallholders, to increase the use of machinery in plantations.

"This is to ensure the level of machinery use in the plantation industry reaches optimum level, increasing productivity and reducing foreign labour dependence."

On the agricommodity sector, he said it had contributed RM61.3 billion to Malaysia's gross domestic product up until the third quarter of this year.

Fadillah said the agricommodity sector includes palm oil, rubber, timber, cocoa, pepper, kenaf and tobacco.

"The sector recorded exports of RM160.6 billion and job opportunities for almost one million Malaysians, especially in the upstream segment."

Fadillah said he would be meeting industry players next week to look at the entire supply chain, including exports and supplies.

"We depend a lot on foreign workers and any shortage will affect production. Therefore, we will consult with the human resources and foreign ministries on how we want to strategise, so that we can look at our internal production, exports and downstream products."