

Public Lecture by

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Malaysia TVET Leadership in ASEAN: Building Skills for a Shared Future

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INTRODUCTION

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.
Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.
Good afternoon.

1. Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to University College London (UCL) for this meaningful opportunity. It is an honour to be here among future leaders, scholars, and professionals - not only to speak about Malaysia's TVET progress but also to represent the aspirations of ASEAN, especially as Malaysia assumes the Chairmanship this year.

2. Over the past year, I have traversed continents in service of a single mission: to elevate the future of skills. In China, I met Premier Li Qiang and secured **5,125 placements** from **220 Chinese firms** to train Malaysian TVET students in high-value sectors - and as a symbol of commitment, they even donated **6 electric vehicles** to our TVET institutions. In the UAE, I met with the Crown Prince and Chairman of the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) - and that engagement led to the signing of a **historic MoU** between **UniKL and MBZUAI**.

3. I have poured my heart into this mission - because for me, it is not about handshakes or headlines, but about impact. These are commitments grounded in a deeper conviction: **Malaysia is ready to be a global platform for cultivating world-class, industry-ready TVET talent**. We are ready to lead, but we know we cannot do it alone. We will achieve this through meaningful partnerships with ASEAN, with global allies, and with Malaysians abroad who share our vision of building a skilled, competitive, and future-ready generation.

4. At the recent ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, I had the chance to engage directly with fellow government and corporate leaders. The appetite for partnership in talent,

technology, and training is real and growing. Everyone is asking - how can we work together? How can we build a shared pipeline of talent for the region?

5. Across the globe, we are witnessing a powerful shift: **TVET is no longer on the sidelines — it now sits at the centre of national economic strategies**. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has compelled every nation to reimagine how we prepare our people for the future of work. In this global race for relevance, **skills are the new currency**. And those who invest in practical, adaptable, and high-impact talent will not just survive - they will lead.

6. But this journey has not always been smooth. For years, TVET was misunderstood - seen as a fallback rather than a path of purpose. That perception is now shifting, but we must be honest as challenges still remain.

7. The lingering stigma that TVET is “second-tier” continues to affect enrolment decisions. A gap still exists between classroom training and real-world industry demands. In many rural areas, institutions are struggling to access modern tools and digital technologies. And across ASEAN, inconsistent recognition of skills and certifications limits mobility and mutual trust.

8. Yet within these challenges lies our greatest opportunity - **to reform boldly, collaborate regionally, and elevate TVET** as a platform for inclusive and future-ready growth.

9. I believe these are not just Malaysia’s challenges - **they are global challenges**. But within each of them lies an opportunity. An opportunity to align, to innovate, and to collectively build a TVET ecosystem that is inclusive, adaptive, and future-ready.

CHAPTER MALAYSIA'S TVET RENAISSANCE

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. This transformation has not happened by chance. It is the result of deliberate policy shifts, relentless inter-agency coordination, and an unwavering belief that TVET must no longer play second fiddle to traditional academic pathways.

11. Under the Malaysia National TVET Policy 2030, we are not just producing graduates - we are shaping professionals equipped for the complexities of a modern economy. Every reform, every investment, is driven by one core principle which is relevance. And in today's economy, relevance means alignment with real-world demand, especially in **High Growth, High Value** sectors such as semiconductors, aerospace, cybersecurity, electric vehicles, industrial automation, and green energy.

12. In fact, what truly sets Malaysia apart is not just our policy framework - but our ability to execute. The launch of the **UP_TVET portal**, single-window platform that consolidates applications has transformed access and transparency within the system. Today, with **1,398 registered institutions**, young Malaysians are empowered to explore diverse training pathways, guided by real-time data and industry demand.

13. Yes, the numbers speak volumes. In 2024 alone, **TVET enrolment in Malaysia soared to 436,285 students.** Even more significant is the fact that over **53.5% of SPM school leavers opted for TVET** - signalling a shift in public perception. The fact that **94.5% of our graduates secure employment** shows that TVET is no longer an alternative - it is a first choice with real outcomes.

14. But we are not stopping there. Our TVET institutions are not only catching up - they are stepping into the future. Artificial Intelligence, robotics, blockchain, and data analytics are no

longer buzzwords - they are becoming embedded in the very fabric of our curriculum. Through strategic collaborations with global tech leaders we are ensuring that our trainees gain exposure to frontier technologies that will define tomorrow's industries.

15. This June, Malaysia will host the 4th ASEAN TVET Council Regional Policy Dialogue themed "TVET for Rural and Regional Advancement," alongside **National TVET Day 2025**. Delegates from ASEAN, Australia, and Germany will explore how TVET can drive inclusive growth, empower youth, and uplift rural communities - while showcasing Malaysia's innovation, industry partnerships, and national transformation in TVET.

16. The message is clear: **Malaysia is not just reforming TVET — we are redefining it.** TVET is no longer a remedial track for the uncertain. It is now the engine of innovation, a strategic pillar of our economy, and a gateway for our youth to participate fully in the industries of the future.

17. I hope have laid out the vision, the policies, the ecosystem, and the bold steps we are taking. But for this vision to truly succeed, **we need all of you here today** - especially our Malaysian students abroad, and every partner who believes in the power of talent to transform nations.

18. So to our Malaysian students here today - you are more than scholars abroad. **You are ambassadors of Malaysia's excellence.** Be the link between our national vision and the global stage.

19. So I urge you to contribute not just as graduates, but as collaborators. Work with us to co-develop international training standards. Share your knowledge by mentoring scholars and TVET trainees. Champion joint research with Malaysian institutions. And most importantly, help us build

strategic linkages between UK industries and Malaysia's TVET ecosystem - opening new pathways of cooperation, innovation, and global relevance.

CONCLUSION: A SHARED VISION FOR ASEAN AND BEYOND

20. As Chair of ASEAN, Malaysia is not just championing skills development - we are building a shared future where talent becomes the currency of trust, growth, and prosperity.

21. We envision an ASEAN where skills move freely across borders. Where certifications are recognised, where curricula are aligned, and where our students and instructors are empowered to learn, teach, and lead - anywhere in the region.

22. We are laying the foundation to become **ASEAN's TVET Certification and Excellence Hub**, particularly in high-impact sectors like aerospace, green energy, and advanced manufacturing.

23. But leadership cannot stand alone. It must be powered by partnership. That is why we are building lasting bridges - with ASEAN, with the United Kingdom, and with each and every Malaysian here today.

24. So let me leave you with this. The world is full of ambition - but what it truly needs are the people with the courage, the vision, and the skills to make it real. Let us be those people. Let us not just imagine the future - let us build it, with our hands, our minds, and our unity. Together.

Thank you.
Terima kasih.