

## M'SIA LACKS EXPERTS IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL FIELDS

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The government, industries and educational institutions should work together on projects that could unearth more talents in the science and the science and engineering fields, which is currently an issue despite the nation's aspiration to be a developed country by 2020.

Women, Family and Community Development Deputy Minister Hannah Yeoh said based on statistics by the National Council for Scientific Research and Development, Malaysia only has 70,000 registered practitioners in both professions in the marketplace.

She said the country will actually need up to 500,000 scientists and engineers by 2020, or seven times more than the current number.

"Moving forward, we need to ensure that we can produce competitive graduates and there should be continuous engagement between the stakeholders," she said, adding that more internship programmes need to be initiated by industries to spur growth, particularly among students.

Speaking to reporters after officiating the 7th edition of Asean M&E Show on behalf of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Yeoh said more efforts should be made to promote more women in the workforce.

Women also need sufficient structure in place to support them at the workplace.

“In order for women engineers to remain competitive in the industry, they must be supported with a more convenient working environment, such as childcare initiatives, so that they can work while monitoring their children.”

Among the ministry’s latest efforts to address the issue include the establishment of child daycare centres at government offices. The concept is also prompted by the various child abuse cases at unauthorised nurseries and private childcare centres that have been widely reported.

Meanwhile, Institute of Engineers Malaysia president David Lai Khong Phooi said according to the National Science Foundation of the US, the number of women employed in science and engineering in the country accounted for only 26% of the total employment. The US boasts of 130 million women in the field.

He added that in Malaysia, 45% of people employed in the professional and technical category are women.

“At the higher educational level, courses involving technical, engineering, manufacturing and construction, the number of women participating in such fields is about the same in the industry — 45%.

“It indicates that Malaysia is close to having gender equality,” he said.