

# ACCA'S FORUM HIGHLIGHTS GBS INDUSTRY'S POTENTIAL TO DRIVE NATIONAL ECONOMIC PLANS

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*Talent development is a key enabler , said industry experts*

**PENANG, Sept 28 (Bernama) --** The contribution of the Global Business Services (GBS) industry towards the overall economic progress of Malaysia was brought to fore at a forum jointly organised by Xstrategize and ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants).

Here in Malaysia and across the Asia Pacific region, an increasing number of companies have started to use shared services and outsourcing to improve their quality, lower costs and increase efficiency.

GBS represents the next phase in outsourced or shared service models. Essentially, GBS aggregates key functions such as finance, HR, IT, customer service, and operations into one organisational structure and governance model, providing business support across the entire enterprise.

This shift to a GBS model of operation translates to job opportunities and revenue generation for the country that hosts GBS companies, which are generally large corporations. Penang, as an established hub for GBS provision in Malaysia, will play a crucial part in maximising the prospects this sector promises.

Speaking in the panel discussion at the forum, Dato' Seri Lee Kah Choon, Director of InvestPenang and Special Adviser to the Chief Minister of Penang, said: "We want to make Penang a location of choice for investment, whether it is for the manufacturing or GBS sector. Through the Penang Cybercity initiative, we aim to provide more MSC status space with the required infrastructure so that international companies would be attracted to set up their business on our shores."

According to Dato' Seri Lee, an important component of this plan is to nurture the talents to support the GBS industry. And this should be an on-going process even as the government and its agencies continue to promote the country.

"Attracting international companies into Malaysia and developing our talents should be done concurrently. We cannot wait until companies are set-up before starting to look for talents. That's why we work with agencies such as MDEC, Outsourcing Malaysia and TalentCorp to ensure there is a solid pipeline of talents," shared Dato' Seri Lee.

In divulging the talent development initiatives by Outsourcing Malaysia (OM) – an initiative under PIKOM, the National ICT Association of Malaysia, its Director, Justin J Anthony, shared that OM already has tie-ups with five public universities, namely Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

“Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia took the lead to develop an elective programme that specifically focuses on GBS. OM has been supporting these universities by providing access to their students to speak to our members who are industry experts, so that they may learn more about career prospects in GBS,” said Justin.

TalentCorp’s Head of Malaysian Talent Development-Graduate Employability, Siti Norliza Mohd Sahar, added: “Universities today welcome interventions from external parties to train their students before they graduate. This has enabled us to implement various initiatives that groom talents earlier in preparation for employment.”

One such initiative is TalentCorp’s collaboration with ACCA to support undergraduates from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris to study the ACCA Certificate in Global Business Services.

The ACCA GBS qualifications were launched in February 2016, providing a suite of three qualifications that are the first dedicated to finance and accounting in shared services and GBS.

Siti Norliza further emphasised that the responsibility of grooming talents is spread out to all parties involve.

“To promote industry-readiness of graduates and to ensure any training programmes are sustainable, TalentCorp consistently collaborates with the Ministry of Higher Education, academia and key industry partners. This can happen through a wide range of initiatives, from raising career awareness in university campuses and providing exposure through competitions, to internship opportunities and developing sector-specific curriculums for short courses, electives and industrial training. This will ensure we have a sustainable talent pipeline,” suggested Siti Norliza.

The urgency to groom talents who are technically sound and capable in performing strategic tasks is underscored for the GBS sector.

Shibu Vadaketh, Head of Strategic Business Development-GBS at MDEC, explained: “The GBS model is also known as the 40% opportunity. If you look at traditional companies, only 5 to 10% of the people at the top run the company. The difference in a GBS set-up is that 40% of the workforce is in a position to be strategic thinkers. The main difference is traditional SSO is about cost arbitration and tactical, while GBS is more focused on end-to-end processes, strategic with some revenue contribution.”

In conclusion, Tony Ong, Managing Partner of Xstrategize, urged for greater cooperation among all parties, saying: "Instead of talent wars, we should focus on growing our talent pool. That requires a concerted and continuous effort that, if successful, will put Malaysia on the global map as a leading GBS hub."

Malaysia's vibrant economy, stable business environment and multi-lingual workforce has ensured that it retained its position as the third most attractive location globally for shared services – a position that has been held for the past 10 years, right after India and China.