

Siva: We have better quality of life

‘Malaysia posted an impressive rise of 26% in human development index’

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has made big improvements in its quality of life with a 26% increase over the past two decades, says Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar.

He said this was based on its Human Development Index (HDI) measured by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

HDI provides a single index measure to capture three key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life; being knowledgeable; and having a decent standard of living.

“Based on the HDI, Malaysia has posted an impressive performance from a mere 0.643 in 1990 to 0.810 in 2019, an increase of 26%,” Sivakumar said during his keynote speech at the MEF National Conference 2023 here.

In 2020, Malaysia was positioned in the high classification group of countries which achieved strong performance in health and education, he said.

“In 2021, the HDI slightly decreased to 0.803, which, in the scheme of things, is reflective of the global trends caused by Covid-19 and climate change.

“Malaysia’s HDI is an annual global exercise which reflects the country’s attitude towards ensuring an inclusive environment for all – across cultural and ethnic communities, geographies, political affinity and beliefs,” he said.

Sivakumar said it was important to have an economy with a social purpose that included a holistic understanding of people’s life situations.

“This (unity) government is mindful of the (people’s) situation and one way to address this is to listen to what you have to say,” he said. He praised the

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) and its collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to provide knowledge tools to employers on various issues.

“This is related to discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, and flexible work arrangements, and in the area of forced labour.

“It conveys a message of hope – that we are enhancing the capacity of both employers and employees to work in dignity, to become a more resilient, productive workforce ready to unleash its full potential,” he said.

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the organisation represented the interest of the business community and continued to engage with different stakeholders to bring about changes. “In recent years, both MEF and ILO have worked hard to educate members to improve their knowledge, attitude and practice related to safe and fair practices.

“I can say the response is very good and there is a concerted effort in the part of employers to stand up and enhance existing practices to ensure workers’ welfare is at the forefront of all our initiatives,” he said.

The MEF National Conference 2023 is a two-day conference that aims to impart knowledge on the HR strategies adopted by industry leaders in meeting business challenges and ushering in a sustainable future.

Among the topics of the conference include building an inclusive workplace for differently-abled employees, the future of youth employment, driving change in delivering business results and more.