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MALAYSIA is vastly different from what it was since its inception, and so are its people. The question of where this nation is heading looms in the back of all our minds, whether young or old.

I, for one, am constantly amazed by how rapidly we've grown. In the business sphere, there's an unshakable sense of excitement.

With an average growth of 6.5% per year since our independence in 1957 to 2005 as identified by the CIA World Factbook, we rank No. 6 out of 10 best countries for long-term growth as stated in HSBC's *The World in 2050* report.

We seem to be poised for the years to come despite the gloom and doom consuming the airways. Promising indicators like these pave the way to a silver lining for this nation, defying the almost unpacifiable doubt weaved into every politicised article we come across.

Returning home wasn't a decision that came easy to me and promises of growth backed by factual data wasn't the way I went about making my decision.

In my case, it was always family that lured me home. You'd think that it would be an easy decision, but after spending what I consider my most formative years in a different country, I realised how impactful a place can be on our decisions.

For me it was the lifestyle that I had become accustomed to which made the change so much more difficult.

The reasons are different for each of us but when you dig deeper, you'll find commonalities in our thought processes,

THE MANY REASONS WHY WE'VE RETURNED HOME

esses, what fuels us to move forward and interestingly enough; what binds us all as Malaysians.

Beyond the *nasi lemak* and *roti canai* which I asked everyone if they could make when they visited from home, there is in fact a deeper sense of nationalism in all of us.

It's shown in our natural sense of cultural understanding, our love of Malaysian food, our celebration of all ethnic holidays. It's safe to say that we're a unique bunch.

As soon as I returned, I noticed areas in which I could be of assistance. When I first picked up the newspapers, I noticed that there were opportunities for more subjective content addressing topics like ageism, inclusive work environments, work-life balance, gender biasness, etc.

So, I gave it a shot and asked for a space in one of our national newspapers.

Under the guidance of an editor who has an appreciation of varied insights, I found an audience and I continue to do so today with my column in

"CONTINUOUS EFFORT - NOT STRENGTH OR INTELLIGENCE - IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING OUR POTENTIAL."
- WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Edgy - speaking to the generation I believe we should be paying focus to.

Little did I know that my thirst to write and a different point of view was in fact an already identified area of need.

The National Key Economic Areas list Communication, Content and related Infrastructure as a key milestone for us to transition from a middle-income to a high-income economy.

In my line of work, I find that often times, the lines between communications and marketing are often greyed.

Communications is the strategy behind marketing and content, is in fact king! I hope in the near future initiatives like the above will make this distinction clear.

I'm a believer in continual improvement; there is always room for betterment and change.

Like many who have braved mov-



Qatar Oil and Gas sector outreach networking session 2013.



UK Healthcare Outreach networking session 2013.

ing overseas, I realised how small the world really is and how fast time passes by.

If change is to come about, it would have to come from within. Gaining better insight into unique organisations such as Talent Corporation Malaysia Bhd, who are determined to make a difference, brought forth relatively silent efforts that are sadly less communicated in the media.

These would be positive efforts I'm sure quite a few of us would like to read about. Government initiatives are simply not sexy. However, they are

necessary.

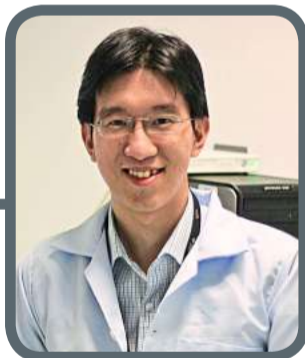
Each story further to mine in this feature will introduce a fellow Malaysian making contributions in national key economic areas by knowledge sharing, going beyond the expected, putting aside any inhibitions and returning home to make a difference.

■ Poonam Balan is a returnee from Canada. She now works with TalentCorp in furthering our communications and collaborative efforts with the Malaysian diaspora dispersed all over the world.

▶ RETURNEES' THOUGHTS

DR CHAU DE MING

Senior lecturer, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
Universiti Putra Malaysia
Returned from: The United States



How did you find out about TalentCorp?

I was working as a research fellow at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City when I first heard of TalentCorp back in 2011.

I was invited by some friends to attend an informal meet-and-greet event with two TalentCorp representatives.

I find TalentCorp's outreach sessions very informative.

The representatives knew the audience well and they were able to address different kinds of questions patiently.

I also enjoyed attending these sessions because of the opportunity to meet other Malaysians.

I got in touch with TalentCorp for advice on how to apply for REP.

The process was quite straightforward and I am thankful for the assistance I received.

Are there any key messages you would like to share with fellow Malaysians abroad who are looking to contribute beyond borders or looking to return home?

I know many Malaysians residing overseas and pursuing a career in research who are looking for opportunities to contribute through dialogue sessions to learn about each other's work, to share research ideas and to exchange research expertise.

Participating in these discussions is the first step towards forming future research collaborations.

I would also like to see Malaysian scientists who are living abroad give research talks in seminars when they are in Malaysia for their vacation.

The purpose is to expose Malaysians to the kind of work

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they do overseas.

In short, there are so many ways where we, as a global Malaysian scientific community, can work together and the key is to take the active step of reaching out to one another.

What are your hopes for Malaysia?

I wish to see more young Malaysians become interested in science. Not merely as consumers but as discoverers and innovators.

One of my roles as a researcher and lecturer is to cultivate a love for science in these young people and to inspire them to do things that can impact the world and improve the daily life of people.

I also hope that the Government will continue to support the research community so that science will one day become a thriving industry in Malaysia.

SHRIANAND PATHMAKANTHAN

Head of research,
CLSA Securities Malaysia
Returned from: Singapore



Tell us about your experience being back in Malaysia from a professional and/or personal point of view.

There was no real tipping point – there is a lot of flexibility inherent in being a single professional.

However, after over four years in Singapore and having picked up a lot of experience working in an international financial centre, I was ready to come back to Malaysia to apply my enhanced knowledge base and skill set to a management and leadership role.

There was also the social pull of family and friends, as well as that comforting general sense of “belonging” that comes from driving on Malaysian streets and having ready access to quality *nasi lemak*!

Working with a Malaysian team is a really great experience compared to many of their global counterparts; I see the typical Malaysian professional as a great balance of intelligence, flexibility and

sociability. No wonder we are such a popular import around the world!

Can you give us some insights about your profession and/or the industry you're currently in?

As far as the equity research profession in Malaysia is concerned, we are really on par with regional best practices and standards. This is a globalised business with few cross-border barrier issues, so a combination of progressive regulators and competition proved that the industry has kept pace and will continue to do so.

Perhaps the biggest change from a structural perspective is the change in client rankings.

Ten years ago, foreign pension funds and fund managers would be the primary source of business for international equity houses like mine.

“ AS FAR AS THE EQUITY RESEARCH PROFESSION IN MALAYSIA IS CONCERNED, WE ARE REALLY ON PAR WITH REGIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND STANDARDS.

Now, with the fall-off in international interest re-investing in Malaysia and the continued growth in domestic savings, domestic funds like the Employees Provident Fund that are our most important clients and we are proud to be their partners as they increasingly invest in the region.

Are there any key messages you would like to share with fellow Malaysians abroad who are looking to contribute beyond borders or looking to return home?

My move back has been working out well for me but of course, you have to do your own careful cost-benefit analysis before deciding as it is a big decision.

Engage with TalentCorp early on – It has a lot of resources to lend (which I only found out about after my decision) that will help you make a decision.