
Session 6

Fireside Chat: Why now? What is Different This Time?

Prof. Dr Ong Kian Ming, Dato' Hamdan Abdul Majeed, and Wong Shou Ning as Moderator

The discussion centred on the future of Malaysia's industrial parks, with a particular focus on Johor's potential to lead in this area.

1. Optimism and Potential

- **Current Sentiment:** Despite past rebranding efforts and a sense of déjà vu in Malaysia's industrial sector, recent polling reflects strong optimism. A significant 86% of respondents believe Malaysia has the capability to develop world-class industrial parks.
- **Johor's Role:** Johor is seen as a frontrunner in this endeavour, particularly through developments like the AME industrial park. This park showcases how integrating high-quality living quarters with industrial facilities can serve as a successful model.

2. Challenges

- **Infrastructure and Management:** Many existing industrial parks in Malaysia are plagued by outdated infrastructure, insufficient management practices, and inadequate planning. These issues are exacerbated by the lack of a cohesive federal classification framework for industrial parks.
- **Resource Constraints:** Federal and state committees are tasked with addressing these challenges but often lack the necessary resources and authority to implement comprehensive solutions.

3. Successful Models

- **AME Industrial Park:** This park in Senai, Johor, stands out as a successful example of modern industrial park development. It features centralised living spaces, high-quality facilities, and well-maintained infrastructure. The park's model integrates residential and industrial areas, demonstrating the benefits of effective planning and continued centralised management.

4. Strategic Growth and Partnerships

- **Expansion and Collaboration:** For Malaysia to advance its industrial parks, strategic growth and partnerships are crucial. The Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) is highlighted as a key initiative that could drive further industrial expansion. This special zone illustrates how cross-border collaborations can stimulate economic growth and development.

- **International Partnerships:** Collaborations with foreign partners from countries like Singapore, China, Japan, and the EU are vital. These partnerships can bring in expertise and investment, enhancing the quality and competitiveness of Malaysia's industrial parks.

5. Modernisation and Sustainability

- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** There is a pressing need to modernise existing industrial parks. This includes upgrading infrastructure, incorporating advanced technologies like 5G, and integrating sustainability from the planning stages.
- **ESG Principles:** Incorporating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles is essential. This approach not only enhances the environmental performance of industrial parks but also ensures that social and governance aspects are addressed.

6. Supporting SMEs

- **Integration of Small Businesses:** It is important to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are integrated into the industrial ecosystem. This requires creating opportunities for SMEs to participate in and benefit from the industrial developments.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Greater collaboration between government bodies, private sector players, and SMEs can help create a more inclusive and supportive industrial environment.

7. Long-Term Vision

- **Sustained Commitment:** Developing successful industrial parks is a long-term endeavour that requires sustained commitment from both the government and private sectors. Strategic planning, ongoing investment, and effective management are key to achieving this.
- **JS-SEZ:** This project is an example of a long-term initiative aimed at economic integration and growth. It represents a model for how long-term projects can drive significant economic benefits and enhance industrial capabilities.

Conclusion

The discussion highlighted that while Malaysia faces several challenges in developing world-class industrial parks, there is a strong sense of optimism and potential, particularly with Johor's leading role. Addressing these challenges requires a focus on modernising infrastructure, integrating sustainability, and fostering strategic partnerships. By leveraging successful models, such as the AME industrial park and the JS-SEZ, Malaysia can work towards creating dynamic, competitive, and well-planned industrial environments. Strategic collaboration, long-term vision, and inclusive planning will be essential for realising the full potential of Malaysia's industrial parks.