



Mentors and mentees await the start of workshops and discussions at the programme's launch in Petaling Jaya.



Munir (second from right) during the pilot run of the Asean Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network project.

# Mentoring Asean entrepreneurs

## Pilot business programme launched to guide regional SME leaders towards success

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THE Asean Business Advisory Council (BAC)-Malaysia teamed up with SME Corporation to organise the pilot run of the Asean Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN) project, launched at the Brickfields Asia College in Petaling Jaya campus.

Asean BAC-Malaysia chairman Tan Sri Mohd Munir Majid said, "This is the first time Malaysia is hosting the first pilot run of the AMEN project, with 10 modules addressing different types of management needs to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) achieve success."

SME Corp chief executive officer

Noor Azmi Mat Said explained how the project was aimed at "establishing a system that will help Malaysian SMEs access the 3Ms – money, market and mentorship".

"This is to help the SMEs scale up their operations and improve profitability and sustainability," he said.

In addressing the audience that comprised senior business leaders serving as business mentors to SME executives as well as Asean BAC colleagues from countries such as Laos, Munir shared how SMEs form the backbone of the Asean economy as they account for over 80% of businesses in the region, but contribute between 30 and 50% of the GDP in each Asean country.

He also highlighted that SMEs

make a sizeable contribution to the employment of the labour force.

"This tells us the productivity level is not high, thus we have to lift the productivity level in SMEs as well as look into expanding the export base; markets and money – looking into the financial needs of SMEs," he said.

Munir added that mentorship and coaching formed one of the most important elements in a project such as AMEN.

"Mentor companies can help put you (mentee SMEs) on the supply chain, giving you the value of linking these small and medium entities to make the profit margin.

"You need money and you need markets," he said while touching on the need for SMEs to place

emphasis on the English proficiency of its teams.

The AMEN project began in Manila in November 2017 and has since been carried out in Australia, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand.

Conceived by the Philippine Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship and Asean BAC Philippine chair Joey Concepcion, the programme is designed to put to good use valuable assets that have long been available in the region and to subsequently direct those assets toward the implementation of a practical and useful mentorship programme that will benefit SMEs.

A highlight of the project is the availability of the pool of duly certi-

fied mentors who can be mobilised across Asean with the goal of ultimately leveraging on SMEs as agents of inclusive growth.

This Malaysian pilot run will be replicated in Indonesia, complete with workshops and discussions bringing together mentors, mentees, consultants and guests immersing themselves in modules designed by the project team.

Mentorship activities across the region will be managed through the Asean Mentorship Institute (AMI).

Asean-BAC Malaysia council member and BAC Education Group co-founder and managing director Raja Singham wrapped up the launch with a talk entitled "Entrepreneurship Masterclass".