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**Celebrating change for lasting impact:** Winners of the Life at Work Awards 2025 marking a shared milestone in Malaysia's journey towards workplaces built on compassion, inclusivity and purpose. — Photos by MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

## THE HEART WORK REVOLUTION



Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd managing director Datuk Ameer Ali Mydin was named CEO Champion (Private Limited Company) for his people-first leadership and contributions to workplace excellence.



Alcon Malaysia took home the Employee Care & Well-being award for championing employee mental, emotional and physical health. With them were TalentCorp deputy chairman Mohd Khuznan Abu Bakar (centre).

Malaysia's LAW 2025 celebrates the nation's growing culture of inclusive and purposeful work

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TEN years after its inception, the Life at Work Awards (LAWA) 2025 marked not just a milestone but a movement that celebrates how Malaysia's workplaces are evolving with compassion, flexibility and purpose.

Hosted by Talent Corporation Malaysia Bhd (TalentCorp), the gala night honoured organisations leading the way in shaping a fairer, more progressive, human-centred world of work. "The real measure of progress is not how high our GDP climbs, but how far our humanity reaches," said Human Resources Minister Steven Sim, who officiated the ceremony.

His message captured this year's theme, "Driving Inclusivity, Powering Sustainability," a reminder that progress is not only about profit, but about workplaces that uplift the people behind them.

### Heart of progress

In his keynote speech, Sim highlighted that amid rapid technological change, people remain Malaysia's cornerstone of growth. "Even the most advanced technologies cannot operate in isolation. They depend on the hands that deliver our food, clean our streets and keep our companies and cities running," he said.

He added that his aspiration is for every Malaysian worker to go to work in honourable conditions, receive dignified compensation and return home safely to

their loved ones.

Inclusivity and flexibility, he noted, have become essential advantages for organisations in a modern economy.

Under the Human Resources Ministry's (Kesuma), policies now give employees the right to request flexible work arrangements (FWA), widen support for parents and returning professionals and promote family-friendly practices.

These reforms have contributed to a more equitable labour market. Malaysia's gender pay gap narrowed from RM211 in 2023 to RM18 in 2025, while the country rose six places in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report to 108th position.

### From policy to people

TalentCorp chairperson Wong Shu Qi said the awards celebrate more than just good policies; they recognise people who lead with empathy and purpose.

"Behind every submission lies a story of innovation, inclusion and leadership—of mothers returning to work, of managers learning to lead differently and of teams proving that compassion and performance can coexist," she said.

Over the past decade, TalentCorp's initiatives have benefited more than 900,000 Malaysians, reinforcing the idea that "doing good for people is good for business," as Wong noted at the recent LAW 2025 Conference 2025.

This year saw a record 266

organisations submitting 719 entries across 13 categories, a 33% rise from 2024.

The increase, Sim shared later during a press session, reflects the growing maturity of Malaysian workplaces and the rising standards of entries submitted, with more organisations embedding inclusivity, flexibility and sustainability into their cultures.

This 2025 edition also broadened the awards' reach by recognising educational institutions through three new categories—Future-Ready University & College, Future-Ready School, and Changemakers—acknowledging the role of schools and universities in nurturing future talent and lifelong learning.

### Driving lasting change

Among this year's 33 winners, several organisations stood out for demonstrating how innovation and care can drive lasting change.

At Mercedes-Benz Malaysia, winner of both the Workplace Innovation and Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) Champion awards, the focus has been on empowering employees to grow alongside technology.

"Everything we do in the HR team is for our employees," said the company's Asia Pacific regional performance operations head and chief human relations lead Reuben Rethinalingam.

"One of our biggest shifts was to upskill our people in digital know-how, fostering digital champions across the organisation."

THE STAR, THURSDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2025

Nation 11



(From left) TalentCorp group chief executive officer Thomas Matthew, deputy chairman Mohd Khuzzan Abu Bakar, Wong Sim, Human Resources Ministry secretary-general Datuk Azman Mohd Yusoff, deputy secretary-general (policy and international) Dr Shaharin Umar and TalentCorp Malaysia group government engagement and facilitation and women, DEI and work life practices senior vice president Mahuran Saro Sariki at the LAWA 2025 awards night in Kuala Lumpur.



Representing SM Teknik, Faruhi hopes the school's win will inspire more education institutions to prepare students for the future of work.



A decade on, the Life at Work Awards continues to honour the people and progress behind Malaysia's most human-centred workplaces.



The team from Sunway Group sharing a light moment with Sim and Wong after winning two awards: Best Organisation and Talent & Sustainability, in recognition of its long term commitment to inclusive and sustainable talent growth.

"We also introduced AI tools to support their work, and encouraged reverse mentoring so employees from different generations could learn from one another."

He added that these efforts reflect the company's people-first strategy, ensuring every innovation enhances the employee experience.

Meanwhile, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) won in the Young Graduates and Digital & Tech Excellence (Public Sector/Private Limited Company) categories for its structured approach to talent development and digital transformation.

BNM's programmes support employees from diverse backgrounds, offering clear career pathways across different roles. Its innovative 'speed dating' system connects candidates directly with heads of department for better alignment, while ensuring fairness in selection and growth.

Its Digital Operations Platform (DOP) integrates HR, finance and procurement systems to improve efficiency and transparency, while AI-powered bots have streamlined internal processes, cutting administrative time by 30% and improving productivity by up to 40%.

"This win is a testament to our collective effort," said business technology deputy director Choong Lee Chen.

"We'll continue improving and aim to come back stronger next year," added people department deputy director Alexa Yim Hew Yan.

Their achievements exemplify how human-centred innovation can thrive even within structured institutions, setting a benchmark for Malaysia's public sector transformation.

#### Shaping from the get-go

The new Future-Ready School category highlights Malaysia's whole-of-nation approach to inclusivity and lifelong learning, showing how the journey to a skilled workforce begins long before one's first job.

As the inaugural winner in the Public School category, Sekolah Menengah (SM) Teknik Alor Setar sets the standard for connecting education with future careers.

School counsellor Mohd Faruhi Johari said the technical school, specialising in STEM education, has seen strong results. "In 2025, 99.6% of our students continued to higher education after SPM," he said.

"Winning this category signals that we have a school that is ready for career students in the future, and I hope this recognition will inspire others to do the same."

The school's success reflects how education plays a vital role in shaping Malaysia's future workforce.

#### Humanity in motion

LAWA 2025 celebrates how workplaces are evolving towards a future that reflects Malaysia's ambition to build a labour market that benefits every sector and generation.

"These organisations prove that compassion is not the opposite of performance, but the foundation of it," said Sim.

"By giving dignity, we gain excellence."

A decade on, LAWA continues to show that great workplaces don't just build careers but also confidence and futures.

As Malaysia advances, the true measure of progress will lie not only in technology or talent, but in the humanity that drives both.



(Sixth from left) Choong and (third from right) Yim with their BNM team celebrating their win with Sim (centre) and Wong (seventh from left). They were honoured for excellence in digital innovation and talent development.



Usains Group receiving the Corporate Social Responsibility award from for integrating social responsibility and environmental care in their operations as Azman (centre) and Matthew (third from left) look on.



Retinalingam (sixth from left) with Shaharin Umar (in yellow) and Mahuran (fourth from right) together with the Mercedes-Benz Malaysia team, winners of the Workplace Innovation and CHRO Champion awards for driving transformation through empathy and upskilling.