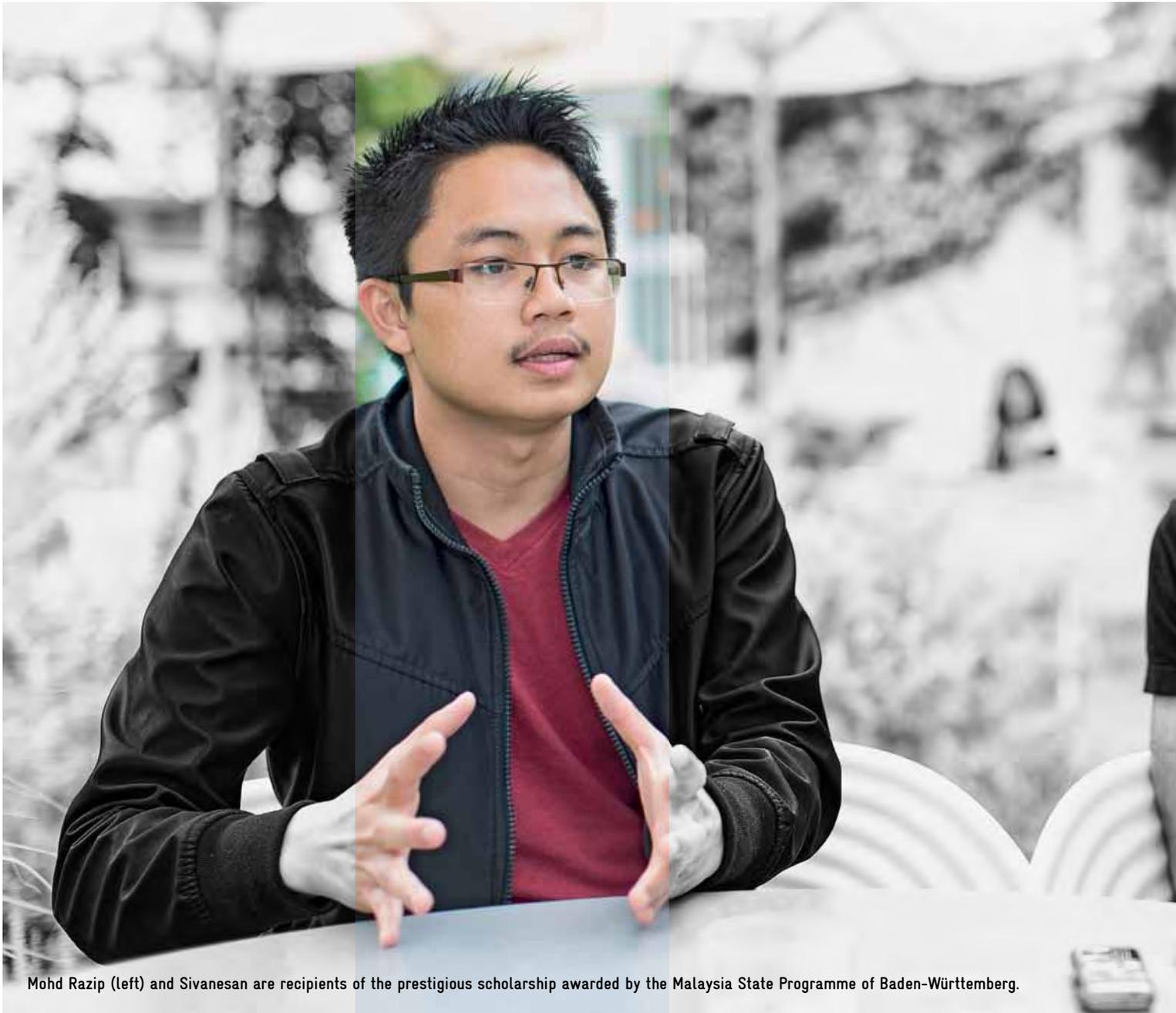


# SUCCESS DOWN SOUTH

Baden-Württemberg and Malaysia have been working in partnership for over 15 years to train Malaysian engineers. Around 90% of the scholarship recipients studying at Swabian universities make the grade – an unusually high success rate.



Mohd Razip (left) and Sivanesan are recipients of the prestigious scholarship awarded by the Malaysia State Programme of Baden-Württemberg.



Malaysia's future engineers are trained in Germany.



**Text** Beate Wörner **Photos** Johannes Wosilat

A young man with a friendly grin sits down at a table on the garden terrace of a café on the edge of Aalen's old town. His name is Mohamad Amirul Ashraf Mohd Razip, or Chup for short. He has just finished a lengthy written examination in inorganic chemistry. Judging by his body language, it has gone well.

Chup is 22 years old and in his third semester studying chemistry at Aalen University. Abiman Sivanesan is also enrolled at the university. The 24-year-old will complete his Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in the winter semester. After that, he hopes to study for a Master's qualification, in order to get one step closer to his dream job as an engineer on a drilling platform. The two young men come from Malaysia and have a scholarship from the Malaysian Government which enables them to study in Germany. 'Everyone on this programme is extremely fortunate,' says Sivanesan.

### 650 graduates and rising

Chup and Sivanesan were admitted to the Malaysia State Programme of Baden-Württemberg after completing their secondary school leaving certificate in their home country. The programme is based on a partnership between Malaysia and the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg. Since the arrival of the first Ma-

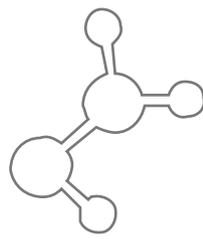
laysia students in 1999, around 650 young men and women have already successfully completed their engineering training at the 13 participating universities in Baden-Württemberg.

### Practice-orientation is the key

Malaysia has made a deliberate decision to have its engineering elite trained in Germany, explains Consul Syarqawi Muhammad. He is responsible for the programme at the Consulate General of Malaysia in Frankfurt. 'Germany is renowned for mechanical engineering and engineering sciences. Our young people should be able to benefit from that knowledge and experience. But we also attach great importance to the training system used at German universities. It is very practice-oriented. Students are required to spend six months working in a company, which gives them extremely valuable practical experience.'

Student Patricia Ting explains just how valuable this engineering course is in Malaysia. 'At home, people feel it is very important to study either medicine or engineering,' she says. 'To do so is considered social success.' The daughter of a teaching family, the 26-year-old is currently studying mechanical engineering at the University of Stuttgart. She hopes to complete her Master's degree next semester.

Preparations for studying in Germany take two and a half years. Scholarship recipients »



study subjects such as mathematics, physics and English – but above all they are required to learn as much German language during this period as is necessary to be able to study at a German university.

### Success with support

Chup, Abiman Sivanesan, Patricia Ting and the other scholarship holders from the Malaysia State Programme are in a comfortable posi-

Ting will soon be writing her Master's thesis.



tion. The universities provide them with tutors who help them with problems, organise extra tuition if necessary, or help them look for company work placements.

GIZ coordinates the Malaysia State Programme on behalf of the state of Baden-Württemberg and the Government of Malaysia and provides support to scholarship recipients even before their departure for Germany. Visa, health insurance, bank accounts – everything is set up for them in advance. The new arrivals are prepared for their life in Germany during a three-week integration course. 'This course was a real highlight for me,' says Sivanesan, looking back fondly. 'We learned a lot, not only about Germany and its culture, but also about everyday chores like doing the laundry.' The integration course also provided practical guidance on making a bank transfer online or using bus and train services to get around. It was followed by a six-week preparatory course in technical language at three participating universities. In addition to providing technical preparation for the degree course, its purpose was to grad-

ually prepare students for life at a German university.

'We get a lot of support,' Sivanesan explains. 'For me the course on applying for jobs was very useful. In it we learned how Germans lay out a curriculum vitae, for example, and how to approach a job interview.' Sivanesan successfully applied his newly acquired knowledge to find a company for his work placement semester.

The intensive support provided to scholarship recipients pays off. More than 90% of the students successfully complete their Bachelor's degrees, and around a half of these go on to take a Master's degree. 'We are very satisfied with this high success rate,' says Malaysian Consul Muhammad.

### The GIZ approach

In designing the study programme, GIZ recognises three factors vital to successfully studying abroad. First up is good pre-university technical and linguistic preparation in Malaysia. This enables students to cope with the

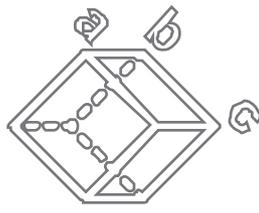
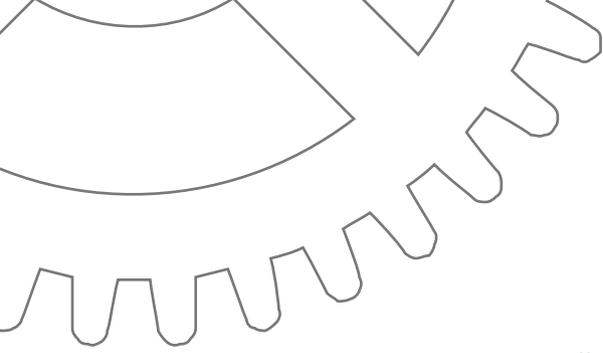
#### » AT A GLANCE

### Close monitoring

The Malaysia State Programme combines educational transfer and cultural exchange. GIZ provides support to students during their time in Germany.



Since 1997, GIZ has been organising a support programme for young Malaysian scholarship recipients studying for an engineering degree at one of Baden-Württemberg's universities. This partnership strengthens educational export and reinforces the reputation of Baden-Württemberg as an international location for education and training. The programme is funded by the State Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts and the Government of Malaysia. GIZ provides support to scholarship recipients throughout their studies. Initial contact is made prior to the participants' stay in Germany in order to prepare them for the initial phase and facilitate their arrival in the country.



pressure to perform and to meet the technical requirements at the universities. The second factor is financial security in the form of a scholarship. This permits young students to give full attention to their studies.

And thirdly, it is important to provide intensive and high-quality support to promote social integration. ‘The key to our success rate of over 90% is the interaction between these three factors,’ says Gabriela Pico from GIZ. ‘The drop-out rate among foreign students in general is around 46%.’

### A win-win situation

The Malaysia State Programme represents a win-win situation for all concerned. For the state of Baden-Württemberg, it offers an opportunity to export the quality of its university education. On completing their training, scholarship recipients return to Malaysia as experts on the Baden-Württemberg education system and in so doing enhance the state’s reputation as an international location for education and training. At the same time, the university programme offers young Malaysians the chance to develop professional and personal ties with Germany early in life. This is of even greater importance, since scholarship recipients often subsequently take up key positions in politics or business.

And last but not least, Malaysia also benefits. ‘Local engineers with a good training in Germany are important for German companies seeking to invest in Malaysia,’ says Consul Muhammad. ‘They not only understand the language of both countries, they also know the culture.’ ■

### › CONTACT

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## › INTERVIEW

### Programme with potential



**Theresia Bauer is Minister of Science, Research and the Arts for the State of Baden-Württemberg.**

#### How important is the Malaysia State Programme in your view?

The programme has always been a key element in the internationalisation of our universities. It has enabled us to develop good relations between our universities in Baden-Württemberg and those in Malaysia. Today there are many graduates of the programme working in key positions. Networks have been created which benefit not only our universities but also the state’s export-oriented industry.

#### What do you see as the principal successes?

First, the practical training. In most countries engineering training is conducted at a high academic level. But this doesn’t always take into account the needs of industry. I’m talking here about engineers who are able to work with the master craftsmen to solve production issues. This approach to training is now gaining worldwide recognition – and the State Programme has played a major part in Malaysia. Secondly, I would like to draw attention to the success of two universities, Karlsruhe and Reutlingen, which have succeeded in setting up degree courses in Malaysia and taken steps to establish a presence abroad.

#### What role does GIZ play in the programme?

A very important one. Foreign students have lower graduation rates than German

students – for a variety of reasons, such as the unfamiliar language and culture and unforeseen financial problems. In our state programme with Malaysia we have a success rate of well over 90%. This rate is dependent on all conditions being met: strict selection, good preparation in Malaysia, a properly funded scholarship, and in particular a first-rate support system. The students receive constant back-up from their very first day in Baden-Württemberg with GIZ playing a leading role in providing this.

#### Do you see potential for similar programmes with other partner countries – to attract foreign skilled labour, for example?

I do see such potential. I think it would be feasible to develop programmes that target students in selected partner countries with the aim of attracting them to enrol in courses in Germany – particularly courses in the German language. The mandatory work placements and Bachelor’s theses bring these students into direct contact with our companies. Whether the foreign graduates subsequently go on to work for German companies in Germany or abroad is a relatively minor detail.

Interview: Beate Wörner