



BIO

NAME

Soon Poh Lean

COMPANY

RHB Investment Bank

POSITION

Director of Regional Mergers and Acquisitions, Investment Banking

BIO

NAME

Mabel Lau

COMPANY

Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Berhad

POSITION

Chief Financial Officer

Dynamic Duo

Work-life balance in Malaysia

AFTER 14 YEARS OF building their careers in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, husband-and-wife duo Soon Poh Lean and Mabel Lau returned home recently under the Returning Expert Programme (REP) to share their expertise and further develop Malaysia's financial industry.

How has your work experience abroad made an impact on your professional lives?

The overseas exposure broadens one's mind. We take a more global view of both our professional and personal lives. We learnt that it is important to take time to understand and respect the local cultures in the countries that we have worked in as connecting with and understanding the people on the ground is key to being successful. We believe that respect is always earned and never given, and these have

certainly taught us to be adaptable. Working outside our comfort zones has also given us the ability to connect and work well with people from all over and broadened our observation on best practices. For example, Hong Kong was extremely fast paced and efficient, while London was much organised.

What are your views on the prospects of Malaysia's financial industry?

The Malaysian financial sector has come a long way particularly since the lessons from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 – the domestic financial market is quite advanced and dynamic compared to most of its ASEAN peers. The challenge is for financial institutions to build sustainable and profitable businesses against the backdrop of a demanding environment, size and scale of strong competition, speed and breadth of

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fund mobility and disruptive trends such as FinTech or financial tech companies. This is why local and regional financial institutions are increasingly aware of the need to attract the right talent to stay competitive.

What were the key factors behind your decision to return to Malaysia?

We were away from Malaysia for 14 years but we feel very blessed to be back home. Mabel's father became quite ill last year and his wish was for us to come home and hence our return to spend some quality years with both our parents. It was definitely the right decision but not an easy one at that time as we were all settled overseas. We cannot be more thankful to return home to be with the family and be able to continue with our careers at the same time. The Returning Expert Programme has also been excellent in making our return seamless. Our five-year-old, Shayna, loves Malaysia and refuses to even go back to Hong Kong for holidays. She tells everyone that there is so little room in Hong Kong, while there is so much space in Malaysia. She has her grandparents completely wrapped around her little finger.

How does it feel to be able to celebrate Chinese New Year this month with your family after so many years abroad?

It is a very cherished and special moment as we are now back home for good and being able to spend more quality time together as a family is invaluable. Just being present for most of these occasions and not needing to rush back to Hong Kong for work and feeling bad for missing the special moments is a real relief. Happy Chinese New Year to all!

Employers recruiting experienced Malaysians from abroad can take advantage of TalentCorp's fast-track Returning Expert Programme application process. Get in touch with us at rep@talentcorp.com.my



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