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**Pooled resources, interagency teamwork key to solving labor shortage**

Premier Lai Ching-te on Tuesday convened the 15th interministerial meeting on accelerating investment in Taiwan, where he said that multiple factors underlie the current labor shortage, including the supply and demand of manpower, the industrial environment and personnel training. Long-term commitment of resources and close cooperation between ministries and agencies will be required to gradually achieve policy results and fulfill industry's needs for labor.

Beginning in November 2017, the Ministry of Labor rolled out three specific strategies for meeting the challenge: job matching and workforce development, higher salary levels and a friendly work environment, and industry-academia cooperation to narrow the education-employment gap. In the eight months since, the many concrete measures are now yielding significant results.

Taiwan's labor market continues to improve, said Premier Lai. The average labor participation rate throughout 2017 was 58.83 percent. In June of this year, the rate rose to 58.92 percent, marking a 26-year high for the month. Furthermore, the average unemployment rate over the first six months of 2018 dropped to 3.66 percentage, an 18-year record low. The total number of people employed averaged 11.407 million between January and June of this year, compared with an average of 11.352 million people employed in 2017. This increase of 55,000 workers to support industry investment and operations marks a success for efforts to meet the needs of businesses.

The need for greater corporate investment in response to economic growth has created

many new employment opportunities. The relatively slower growth of the workforce, however, has led to a shortage of labor. The government will take a systematic approach to unlock the hidden potential of Taiwan's labor market, further bolstering employment among young people, women and middle-aged and older workers.

The government's promotion of its long-term care 2.0 plan is aimed at keeping middle-aged and older workers in their jobs, or making it possible for those who have already withdrawn from the labor force to return, said the premier. Women are also being encouraged to return to work, with the Employment Service Act targeting women who have left the workforce to give birth or handle other domestic tasks. Starting this year, authorities have hosted seminars and training, and provided other services to both potential employees and employers in order to create a friendly working environment for women. These efforts helped connect job seekers to 10,100 positions in the first six months of 2018.

Observing that education and vocational licensing are not meeting the needs of businesses, Premier Lai instructed the Ministry of Education to continue efforts to cater to employer needs and review the vocational licensing system in cooperation with other responsible ministries and agencies. With a first-rate path for career development, Taiwan can produce many fine vocational school graduates who will leave campus with bright prospects.