

Forum: Citizen's forum of Labour

2026

Theme : Empowering the youth to drive/ thrive/ embrace and match the requirements of the future labour market

Name of the citizen : Ramona LOCK

Family situation ☐ Married / dating ☒ Single ☐ With kids, if so how many _____	Education level ☐ Primary ☒ Secondary ☐ University
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1. How are you concerned by the subject?

I am a man in his 30s working as a Grab driver in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Every day, I drive through heavy traffic to make a living in the gig economy. This kind of work is huge in Malaysia now: data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) shows that over 26% of our workforce, which is more than 4 million people, works in gig or informal jobs. Like many young adults in Southeast Asia, I started doing this because I needed fast money and liked the idea of being my own boss. But the day-to-day reality is much more uncertain than it looks.

Right now, I do not own the car I use for work. I have to rent it daily, so a huge chunk of my income goes straight to rental fees and petrol before I can save anything. My main goal is to save enough money to buy my own car. Owning my vehicle would change everything for me: it would cut my daily expenses, make my income steady, and give me real financial control. But saving up is really tough when my daily earnings fluctuate so much.

My daily routine is completely decided by an algorithm. Grab's app decides my fare prices, gives me rides, and rates my performance without any human explaining how it works. If the algorithm changes its fee rates or freezes my account because a customer left an unfair review, my income drops to zero instantly, and I have no one to talk to. On top of that, because I am an independent driver, I do not get basic benefits like health insurance, paid sick days, or contributions to my EPF retirement account and SOCSO protection. This is a big issue for young people today, as more of us end up in app-based jobs where companies use technology to avoid giving workers standard protection.

2. What do you suggest on your scale ?

I do not think we should ban apps like Grab. Ride-hailing gives people reliable transport in busy cities and offers quick jobs to young workers who need an income. However, flexibility should not mean that workers get unfair treatment. We need a system that protects drivers while still allowing technology to grow.

First, we need clear rules for how algorithms work. Tech companies should be open about how their apps calculate driver pay and assign rides. Drivers also need access to real human support when there is a dispute, so accounts are not suspended automatically without a fair review.

Second, governments should make sure gig workers get basic safety nets. Companies like Grab should help pay into national protection plans like Malaysia's SOCSO and EPF funds. These benefits should belong to the worker, so we keep our healthcare and retirement savings even if we switch apps or work part-time.

Finally, to help young drivers become financially independent, banks and labor departments should offer affordable, low-interest loans for gig workers. Cheap loans would help drivers buy their own cars instead of renting them at high daily rates. By combining transparent app rules, proper safety nets, and fair loans, we can make gig work a safe and reliable option for the future workforce.