

MONEY TALKS

JUN 25 · 7 · 2000

By SEEMA VISWANATHAN

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, citing his salary as an example, blamed low pay for a brain drain of civil servants which in turn is affecting the quality of civil service.

While stressing the need for strong public services, the Prime Minister lamented that the government cannot attract "the best peo-

ple", unless it pays very well.

In a lighter vein, he said: "I have a complaint too. I am the CEO of Malaysia Inc and I get paid RM16,000 a month, while those under me (in Malaysia Inc) are getting RM40,000, so I want to leave government."

He added, during a dialogue session at the Malaysia Inc Summit today, that the public sector's position as a well-paying and stable employer has been taken over by the advanced private sector in the country, which offers very high salaries.

The Prime Minister, who was asked to comment on the issue by a summit delegate, said young people entering the job market today can negotiate their salaries with companies and move from one interview to another until

they find the right price.

"But you cannot negotiate with the government, so they won't join the civil service, and also because of this those in the public sector will move to the private sector," he added.

Mahathir said while an obvious solution to this would be to raise government salaries, the move would be followed by a rise in private sector pay and would thus not bring any change in the situation.

"The real solution is to prosper the country, to make the government so rich that we can pay very well," he added.

Mahathir also urged private companies to pay reasonable salaries and not to use all their profits to give very high salaries to their employees.

He also hoped that one day Malaysians would work for the government for the sake of job satisfaction, adding that the public sector is a very "nice" place to work in.

The two-day Malaysia Inc Summit sees the participation of high-level government officials, and representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private companies.

Today's summit discussed the effectiveness of the Malaysia Inc concept since its introduction in 1963, the progress made with the government's privatisation activities and the implementation of the electronic government.

► *More Malaysia Inc reports Page 2*