

**Brain drain: 'Don't blame gov't alone'**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**July 5, 2011**

While some of the best and brightest talents have left Malaysia for greener pastures, Minister in Prime Minister's Department Idris Jala defends the government, saying it should not be faulted entirely.

The blame should also be shared by employers and chief executive officers for not being able to provide a "meaningful job", he said today.

"If anyone leaves your company, it's your fault as the CEO and not the (fault of the) government. You could keep the guy, but you'll have to raise his pay. So what do you do to make the job meaningful as the CEO?" he asked.

Speaking at a question-and-answer session at an Economic Transformation Programme function at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, he related his time in the corporate field as a CEO.

"I worked for 33 years in Shell and I was the Malaysia Airlines CEO before. Whenever we had a pilot leaving the company - and at that time (there were) quite (a lot leaving) since Middle Eastern airlines were just pouring money into finding talent - I always said that it was entirely my fault," he said.

He also said that, while the government recently set up Talent Corporation Malaysia to plug the brain drain and to convince Malaysians to return home, there was only so much that it could do.

**1.4 million Malaysians living abroad**

"In Talent Corp, we do provide a lot of avenues like letting the children (of foreign spouses) go to school. But if it is not (for) the right pay, they will still leave," he said.

It is estimated that there are currently 1.4 million Malaysians living abroad, with the vast majority of them being professionals.

According to a recently released World Bank report on the Malaysian brain drain, 54 percent of the Malaysian diaspora went to Singapore while 15 percent went to Australia, 10 percent to United States and five percent to the United Kingdom.

The report also said that the top three drivers for brain drain were career prospects, compensation and social justice, and that the non-bumiputeras were notably over-represented in the phenomenon.

However, Idris is still looking at the silver lining behind the issue.

"We have to see it both ways. If people want a lot of Malaysian talent, it means that we are in demand and that the talent is good.

"If they don't want us, it means our talent is no good," he said.

Preparing for any situation when there is lack of local talent, Idris summed up the government's contingency plan: "If there are no more local talent, then we'll just have to bring in foreign talent."