

The Growing Brain Drain List
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It was reported yesterday that former Petronas CEO Hassan Marican is set to be appointed chairman of Singapore Power Limited (SP) in June succeeding Ng Kee Choe who is retiring.

Hassan left our national oil company in 2010 allegedly due to friction with the current administration, and has since been appointed as director in a number of foreign firms such as Singapore government-linked companies SembCorp Industries Ltd, SembCorp Marine Ltd and Singapore Power. He is also a director at Sarawak Energy Bhd and US oil and gas giant Conoco Phillips.

It would appear that Hassan is internationally appreciated and highly sought after by big multinational corporations but not at home. This is extremely sad, especially when he is widely credited as the man who turned Petronas into the leading international oil and gas company that it is today.

Last year, World Bank senior economist Philip Schellekens warned that the Malaysian brain drain situation is likely to intensify, further eroding the country's already narrow skills base.

Schellekens added that the number of skilled Malaysians living abroad has tripled in the last two decades with two out of every 10 Malaysians with tertiary education opting to leave for either OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries or Singapore.

Now, Hassan has joined this growing list of nearly 2 million Malaysians who have left since Merdeka to live and work overseas. Talent such as Hassan Marican does not come by every day, and our Government must take immediate measures to plug this leak in order to retain such talent or risk losing him and many more like him to overseas countries.

It is a sad day for Malaysia when we cannot keep our best and brightest. If even an iconic corporate leader like Hassan Marican is forced to depart to Singapore, where his talents are not ignored, Najib government's transformation programme to attract human talents is a failure.

Clearly so long as political know-who supersedes technical know-how, negotiated deals are preferred to open tenders and there is neither full accountability nor transparency, Malaysia is fighting a losing battle to stem the brain drain.

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