

The lure of civil service

In times of volatility, govt jobs offer security but not all will find them attractive

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PETALING JAYA: Government jobs are looking more attractive in these volatile times due to the security and stability they offer compared to the private sector.

But not all would find them attractive, industry players said.

The Malaysian Employers Federation's (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said government jobs offer the security of permanent employment with benefits like a pension scheme and housing loans with an interest rate of only 4% further attracting job seekers.

According to Cuepac's secretary Abdul Ghani Zainudin, the salary scheme in the civil service had improved with basic salaries of the lowest ranks up by 35%, while staff at other levels enjoyed a 25% pay hike in 2007.

Civil servants at the management and professional levels had a pay rise of 15%, while those in the top-most tier, for example, university professors and secretaries-general of ministries, enjoyed a 7.5% increase.

"Last month, over 60,000 civil servants contributing to the Employees Provident Fund were given the option to change to pension scheme, which also provides medical benefits for life," Abdul Ghani said.

He added that pensioners who had served for more than 25 years also enjoyed an up to 20% rise in pensions. However, Shamsuddin of MEF said the improved salary scale in the government sector would not necessarily draw the public to the civil service.

He pointed out that salary

increments and upward mobility were slow as it would depend on seniority and the level of paper qualifications.

"People who are more ambitious and thrive on challenges would prefer the private sector where remuneration commensurates with performance," he noted.

Talent2 International Ltd director for South Asia, Leigh Howard, concurred with Shamsuddin that although government jobs traditionally offered security, their attractiveness depended on the type of career and working environment for the individual concerned. And while allowances may be high, base salaries are typically lower in the civil service.

"For example, at the senior end, there is still the concept that talented executives would do their 'national service' and contribute to nation building by working for the government and government-linked companies. This is often accompanied by a hefty cut in salary compared to private sector jobs," Howard said.

Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) secretary-general G. Rajasekaran said the attractiveness of government employment depended on the level.

"Industrial and manual workers in the government sector have a minimum wage of at least RM1,000 together with medical benefits for self and family as well as pension while lower-level workers in the private sector receive between RM500 to RM600 monthly with very minimal medical benefits," he said.

However, job opportunities and growth were more prevalent in the private sector, Rajasekaran noted.



Shamsuddin Bardan



G. Rajasekaran



Leigh Howard