

Engineers seek better terms in govt

The professionals want to become decision makers

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PETALING JAYA: Engineers must be given a chance to become decision makers in the Government or it will be a loss to the nation.

"Engineers are prime movers of progress and the main drivers of Vision 2020, yet their career path in the Government is limited," said Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM) president Datuk Lim Chow Hock.

There are some 10,000 engineers graduating yearly and many want to join the government service because of the working environment, salary and allowances, but they're put off by the lack of prospects for promotion to the premier grade.

"There are about 8,000 engineers in the public sector but there is only one secretary-general with an engineering degree.

"To encourage more nation builders, engineers must have the opportunity to qualify for premier grade positions like state secretary and secretary-general.

"But such posts are usually reserved for administrative and

diplomatic officers," he said in an interview.

He said of the 50 premier grade positions available, at least half should go to engineers.

Engineering, he added, was the foundation of almost all the 12 National Key Economic Areas under the Economic Transformation Programme.

On Feb 28, *Sunday Star* warned that the nation's dream of becoming a high-income nation by Year 2020 could crumble if Malaysia does not produce enough engineers, architects, and other science-related professionals.

Lim said engineers worked behind the scenes in numerous fields, including food production, sanitation, healthcare, education, transportation and utilities, flood mitigation, telecommunications, ICT, construction and defence.

IEM Public Sector Engineers Special Interest Group chairman Datuk Lt Kol Kamarulzaman Zainal (Rtd) said a proposal on improving the scheme for engineers would be presented to the Prime Minister's Department by December.

Its main recommendation is for decision-making positions to be

opened up to engineers.

The group's adviser First Admiral Datuk Ahmad Murad Omar (Rtd) said engineers made good administrators and could be trained for premier grade posts.

"Engineers shouldn't be pigeon-holed based on their academic background. Don't just confine them to roles in the local council or Public Works Department," he said.

On the number of engineers, IEM vice-president Gopal Narian Kutty said there were about 200,000 engineering degree holders in Malaysia but only half were registered with the Board of Engineers Malaysia.

"On average, a fresh graduate's starting pay is between RM2,300 and RM2,800 but it's a 3D job - dangerous, demanding and dirty.

"Many give up in the first three years. Unlike doctors and lawyers, engineers are taken for granted.

"That's why there's a shortage of mid-management talents, particularly in electrical and electronic engineering, construction, and the rail and automotive sectors, especially in industrialised states like Penang and Johor," he added.