

**T**HERE was a time when most youngsters could not wait to move out of their parents' homes.

For those living outside the Klang Valley, moving to Kuala Lumpur meant the beginning of a new life, start of a career and, of course, being away from the watchful eyes of their parents.

The independence that came with it for young adults was just too irresistible. Living alone or sharing an apartment with friends offered better privacy than staying with the folks, even if it ate into their pay.

But many unmarried young Malaysian adults, especially among the urban middle class, are now opting to stay with their parents.

They have become a lot smarter. They get to keep their salaries while enjoying the comforts of a proper home and do not have to pay for the utility and household food bills. They also have the maid to take care of their demands, which include washing their cars.

No wonder our kids grumble when they are picked for National Service, which is really just like an outward bound training programme compared with the real McCoy in Singapore. There, they are dressed and treated like real soldiers.

Living such pampered lifestyles, where many seem to have their own cars even when they are still in college, these young adults' outlook has also changed.

Employers have found that many job entrants snub a RM2,500 starting salary even when they have yet to prove themselves. Some already receive pocket money of about RM1,000 a month and fear losing their allowances from their parents once they start working. For these spoiled kids, it's just bad mathematics.

Some, I have been told, receive pocket money of at least RM2,000 a month because they maintain a lifestyle that includes having regular sessions at Starbucks and clubs and, of

# Challenge yourselves

Young people who just whine at the demands of their employers or prefer to stay within the confines of Daddy's home won't go far.



course, raking up bills for the mobile phone and iPad.

So, the result is they can be choosy. This attitude is an issue faced by many employers these days.

We do not need an in-depth survey to know the condition of the job market. A managing director of a media company told me last week that a young applicant refused to accept her job offer because the office was located in Petaling Jaya.

"She said her home was in Cheras and having to wake up early to beat the traffic jam to PJ wasn't appealing. So she just turned us down," she said.

Good workers are hard to come by and it does not help that Malaysian employers are not quite prepared to offer competitive salaries, conscious of the fact that this would add to their costs.

Young staff bring in greater energy, freshness and a better outlook but these don't necessarily come with more passion or loyalty. Young Malaysians today would probably have

worked in at least six companies, maybe even more, within a short period.

The good ones know they would be talent scouted or they would simply leave for other jobs that offered better salaries and perks.

This writer has worked for *The Star* for 27 years, which probably makes me a Jurassic subject here. I have had only one employer and while it may seem strange to many young people, those of my generation would understand.

I travelled around campus on a motorcycle, which was regarded as a privilege then, and I used the same *kap cai* when I started work in Penang.

Getting my first car, which was the result of some serious saving, was a great achievement. And it was a second-hand car.

The biggest headache for employers today, however, is the inability of many job seekers to speak and write well in English. This is high on the list of minimum requirements.

Recruitment advertisements, whether in print or online, state clearly that English is an absolute essential, but many job seekers cannot pass this first hurdle.

"It has become a norm to hear applicants speaking in Bahasa Malaysia or Mandarin when they call up. You can tell that they cannot even carry out a simple conversation in English," an employer tells me.

But as Malaysian companies look beyond

the local market, which is really tiny in comparison to Indonesia, India, China or the Middle East, they would acknowledge that applicants who speak more than just English would be more marketable.

My non-Chinese friends are often annoyed when they read job advertisements specifying Mandarin-speaking candidates. I tell them many Malaysian Chinese from English-medium schools would share their feelings.

"Bananas" like me – yellow outside but white inside – would struggle like my non-Chinese brethren if we were in China because of our language handicap. The reality is that many companies need to do business in China, which has become the world's most important market. And with Europe on the decline economically, China's status has become even more powerful.

So there really is nothing discriminatory about those advertisements. A Malay who can speak and write Chinese would probably get the job. There are two Malay reporters in *The Star* with these skills and they are regarded as gems.

Dubai is also a strategic hub with many multi-national companies setting up their regional headquarters there. Surely, job seekers who speak Arabic would enjoy an advantage there.

The question is how ready are our young adults to learn new skills, including language and even social networking skills, to make them more marketable?

We won't go far if we continue to whine at the demands of our employers or just prefer to stay within the confines of Daddy's home.

Go out there and challenge yourselves.