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Vital for civil servants to remain professional

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OF late, the media has given considerable coverage to the issue of civil servants and politics. On Nov 5, two news items were given prominence in all major dailies.

One was that 20 senior government officers were under investigation for allegedly taking part in opposition ceramah.

It quoted Public Service Department director-general Tan Sri Samsudin Osman as saying "if there is evidence that government servants are participating in events detrimental to the Government, disciplinary action can be taken against them".

Another report, quoting the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, stated that "civil servants were generally loyal to the Government of the day and the people should not question their integrity".

He said if there were indeed civil servants who were anti-government, the Government would have been crippled by now.

Prior to the news reports, there had been much talk about the involvement of lower-rung civil servants in opposition politics.

Government leaders have reason to be concerned and have responded on several occasions, some even calling on those involved to resign and go into full-time politics.

The latest statement came from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who said that civil servants should not be involved in partisan politics, but be professional in discharging their duties as civil servants.

Dr Mahathir said the country and its people would ultimately suffer if administrative officers practised partisan politics and faulted on professionalism.

He said the separation from partisan politics was important to ensure that Government's policies and projects, which were for the people's benefit, were implemented and not "thwarted" by personal political beliefs.

Realising how important the role of the civil service is in serving the people and the nation, it is vital for civil servants to remain professional and continue to discharge their duties responsibly and efficiently.

However, this does not prevent these civil servants from exercising their rights and freedom to choose whichever political party they want to support in the general election.

This is the essence of democracy, and like all other Malaysians, it is up to the civil servants to exercise their personal right to support a party of their choice.

Government employees must serve the Government of the day in a dedicated and loyal manner, implementing the policies and programmes of the Government, irrespective of their personal preferences and judgments.

This has been a long tradition which has provided stability to the country.

These are the central characteristics of government service in Malaysia - permanency, neutrality and a career service.

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