

29/01/2000

Govt to study proposal for IT training institute

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THE Government will study a proposal by the Congress Union of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) for the establishment of a manpower training institute to create a pool of civil servants skilled in information technology (IT).

Describing Cuepacs' proposal as good, Human Resources Minister Datuk Fong Chan Onn said the move will supplement the country's need for IT-based workers in future.

"When the country reaches the IT-age or the developed nation status by 2020, it is necessary for civil servants to know about the industry.

"This would help them tackle and understand the current issues relevant to the multimedia and IT industry," he told newsmen after meeting Cuepacs leaders, led by its president N. Siva Subramaniam in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

In the proposal submitted to the ministry, Cuepacs had also suggested that the institute be located within Cyberjaya, the country's intelligent city or Putrajaya, the new Government administrative capital.

Siva Subramaniam said the objective of setting up such an institute is not only to train the civil servants but also to show the world that "we are not second class citizens in the IT and multimedia industry".

"Furthermore, Malaysia is focusing towards becoming a developed nation by 2020. By the time the country achieved its developed status, it would need about one million skilled workers, especially in the IT and multimedia industry.

In fact, Siva Subramaniam claimed that Malaysia is currently importing some 20,000 skilled workers in the IT and multimedia industry. "Thus, we must plan early to avoid such a situation," he said.

On the Cabinet's decision that the retirement age for civil servants remain at 55 years, Fong said the ministry has no say on this matter.

"It depends on the findings by the Public Services Department which will then recommend to the Government whether to extend or not the retirement age for the civil servants," he said.

Siva Subramaniam also concurred with Fong, saying that the Cabinet's decision is not final and Cuepacs will continue to pursue the matter.

"Cuepacs will submit the proposal on the age limit when we meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon.

"We will furnish him (Dr Mahathir) with details on why the retirement age should be extended beyond 55 years. Let the Prime Minister decide," he said.

To a question whether the private sector should follow the Government's decision to declare the third Saturday of the month as holiday for their staff, Fong said employers have to consider the implications before taking a similar stand.

"They must remember that most public servants like to settle their bills or whatever personal matters on Saturday. Those providing services such as banks, postal and telecommunications companies should consider first before declaring Saturday as a holiday as the civil servants would need their services on that day," he said.

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