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Get cracking on JCC meetings

COMMUNICATION and interaction between the Government and workers is essential for building trust and confidence and to strive for mutual benefit for the good of the country. Joint Consultative Council meetings between Ministries and agencies, and unions in the civil service give an opportunity to workers to voice their woes and grouses. Indeed, such meetings are a practical way for both parties to deliberate and share their views and experiences as well as to nurture continued interaction. But sadly, half the JCCs are not functioning as Cuepacs president N.Siva Subramaniam says.

Acknowledging that the issue of the JCCs' non-performance had been raised many times before, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman said heads of departments had been directed to set up the councils some time ago and that some had yet to hold their meetings. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed Ministries and agencies to submit regular reports to him on such meetings. It is high time these department heads get cracking as such foot-dragging negates the Government's efforts to forge closer ties with unions in the civil service.

Perhaps, they are not knowledgeable about issues affecting workers and as such, there is a lack of interest on the part of departments in either starting or re-activating communication with employees. It is only when the Government is aware of the fundamental concerns of civil servants that it can act on them. The sheer size of the civil service makes it well nigh impossible for the Government to know first-hand all the problems besetting its employees. The administration has always adopted an accommodative stance towards problem-solving which it believes is a two-way street.

The mutual support and co-operation between Cuepacs and the Government has enabled many hiccups to be ironed out. Unlike some who resort to banging on tables at negotiations, we believe the consultative approach works best. Confrontation can only result in tension and bad blood at the negotiating table. Employees have their expectations but their demands must be reasonable. The smart partnership among employees, employers and the Government has enabled the country to enjoy good times and weather bad patches as well. The tripartite ties have augured well for a good and productive relationship.

Despite the challenges posed by economic difficulties, there are still many job opportunities especially in the manufacturing sector, for many companies are still holding their ground. Workers who share the country's vision should realise the importance of productivity and strive for growth together with management. At a time when globalisation and liberalisation are creeping in on us, a lackadaisical attitude and inefficiency will only land us in the backwaters. Sometimes, policies with far-reaching implications and good intentions fall flat for lack of efficient planning and implementation. This is where department heads have to be on their toes to see that policies are executed speedily.

Just as a good leader always lends an ear to his team members, the team should similarly reciprocate in sharing its views. This paves the way for effective problem-solving. Together with the drive and dedication of a responsible workforce, there is no reason why the economy cannot move ahead. This, after all, is the common objective that will stand everybody

in good stead.

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