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Kayveas comes under fire for 'not people-friendly' comment

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Various organisations dispute the statement by People's Progressive Party president Datuk M. Kayveas that local authorities are not people-friendly.

The Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Service described the comments as inaccurate.

"Bureaucracy is only a problem of a few individuals in government departments. This has been admitted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad," Cuepacs secretary-general Datuk Abd Rahman Manan said in a statement.

He said government bodies have their own customer charters. Suggestion boxes and "meet-the-public" days are regularly held for the benefit of the public.

"Cuepacs believes that a strong bond exists between staff and government authorities, who have always assisted elected representatives when necessary. Many government departments and agencies have revised working procedures to enhance the quality of their services.

"Cuepacs will co-operate to ensure that government officers and staff continue to provide the best services and honour their client's charter."

Kayveas, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, made his statement in his speech to the 50th PPP general assembly yesterday.

"Kayveas' comments do not apply to the MPPP," said Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) councillor Wong Mun Hoe, citing the council's many people-friendly approaches adopted.

"Ratepayers have direct access to councillors. For instance, through our Jendela Pelanggan (customer window) sessions, the public can meet the council president and heads of departments to give feedback. MPPP council meetings are also open to the public.

"The council participates in the Local Government Consultative Committee, comprising non-governmental organisations for women and the handicapped," he said.

MPPP also has a website for people to file their complaints via e-mail, in addition to the regular channels of phone and post.

Ipoh Datuk Bandar Datuk Sirajuddin Salleh said he holds regular meetings every three months with Barisan National representatives to hear grievances and suggestions from the public.

"We are very accessible and co-operative. What more do you want me to do?" he asked.

Sirajuddin said Kayveas had launched the security forces exhibition in Ipoh during the city's 15th anniversary celebrations in June.

"He actually praised the city council highly then," he said.

Johor Local Government Committee chairman Datuk Jimmy Low said the remarks by Kayveas were uncalled for and inappropriate.

"As a former Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister, he should know the workings of the ministry and the programmes implemented to make life easier for the public.

"I'm sure Kayveas is aware of the policies and rulings introduced by Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting for the good of the public," said Low, citing council measures like tree-planting and cleanliness campaigns.

"We have a complaints bureau and open days for the public. We have also introduced online credit card payments for government bills. The country's assessment rates are also the cheapest in this part of the world, and we

are constantly trying to make life more comfortable for the rakyat," he added.