

'Is PM Najib anti-Malay, too?'

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by Nigel Aw

DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua has brushed aside criticism against him for suggesting measures to shrink the civil service if Pakatan Rakyat comes to power, pointing out that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has already introduced similar measures.

"The prime minister himself announced a policy (in the Budget) to allow for voluntary early retirements for civil servants and a system for the removal of civil servants who have breached disciplinary protocol. Is the prime minister also anti-Malay?" he asked after an economic forum in Kuala Lumpur last night.

Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia had in a column in its Sunday version launched a broadside against Pua, describing his suggestion to shrink a Malay-dominated institution as a provocation.

Earlier during the forum, Pua candidly recollected the mountain of criticism he has received following Utusan Malaysia's editorial piece, including from Johor Baru MP Shahrir Samad and deputy speaker Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar.

"I did not mention a single word of Malay or bumiputera in my entire speech but when this appeared in Utusan Malaysia even someone rational like Shahrir Samad said DAP is racist for wanting to cut the civil service.

"When Najib says it (measures to cut civil service), everything is good, but when Tony Pua says it, he is a racist," he quipped.

'Civil service cost tripled'

On a serious note, Pua said the controversy arose after he responded to an audience on how Pakatan would solve the ballooning cost of the civil service during a forum in Johor Baru.

He pointed out that the cost of civil servants pay and pension have more than tripled from RM20 billion in 2000 to an expected RM61.4 billion for 2012.

"It is probably the single most challenging problem that we have to resolve if we take over Putrajaya. You can't sack all the civil servants but you probably need to put in place some measures to restructure and shrink it over time."

Pua added that the civil service cannot be forcefully cut as the government must maintain its relationship with the civil service, but it can offer attractive benefits to encourage early retirement.

This, he said, was a legitimate issue that needed to be addressed, especially since the country's civil servant to population ratio stood at 4.6 percent compared to about 2 percent for countries in the region, and slammed BN for politicising the matter.

"Everything has to be painted in a negative light, everything takes a racial connotation, this is how irresponsible the BN is."

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