

Penang monitoring staff recruitment in state agencies

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By Susan Loone

The Penang government has put in place a monitoring system for the recruitment of staff in state agencies under its jurisdiction to ensure no cronies are hired or nepotism practised.

These agencies include the two local governments - Penang Island (MPPP) and Seberang Perai (MPSP) municipal councils - the Penang Development Corporation (PDC), Penang Water Authority and Penang Hill Corporation.

Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy said the state was gradually restructuring its employment policies to emphasise more on meritocracy to bring in more qualified people from all communities.

He added that efforts are being made to correct the racial balance of those employed in state government agencies.

Ramasamy pointed out that in certain state agencies, like the PDC, the employment of non-Malays was in a "miserable state of affairs" before 2008, prior to Pakatan Rakyat governing the state.

"As chairperson of the recruitment committee for these agencies, I can make sure that qualified people instead of cronies are employed, that there would also be less incidents of nepotism," he said in an interview with Malaysiakini.

"As chairperson, I can recall the files, check the qualifications and question why certain people are hired, I can set certain standards for hiring," he added.

"Even recruitment of people under the state agencies' subsidiaries are brought under my fold. So I set monitoring guidelines to ensure a better employment policy for all," he stressed.

Apart from human resources, Ramasamy's portfolio includes education, science and technology, while managing the Penang Hindu Endowment Board as the chairperson.

azlanOn Friday, Ramasamy presented statistics of Indian Malaysians in the civil service, saying the employment rate has improved under Pakatan's rule as the appointments are based on merit.

This has been lauded by the Malaysian Indian Progressive Association, which urged that meritocracy be implemented nationwide.

It would be a challenge for the federal government, though, as since taking office in 2009, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's move to implement merit-based policies has faced fierce resistance from ultra-right wing Malay groups.

However, there is still room for improvement in Penang, especially where the Indian Malaysian employment rate is concerned.

Not a racial but a class issue

Ramasamy sees the Indian Malaysian question not as a racial but a class issue, describing them as an "injured and most marginalised" community.

He expressed concern that while the employment rate for Indian Malaysians has improved in the local councils, most are on contract basis and are not full-time staff.

Part of the restructuring includes improving the hiring situation for the Indian Malaysian community to more secured positions, he said.

"We want to ensure qualified people are recruited, we speak about meritocracy in recruitment for jobs but most of the Indian Malaysians are not in regular jobs, they can be dismissed any time and their future is not secured," he added.

"In federal agencies, we do not have a say. But we do have a say in state agencies," he noted.

"Since I am in charge of the recruitment committee in these agencies, I have the major say, to ensure 'good people' are employed from all communities," he stressed.

"It is hoped that with our emphasis on merit, we can also raise the Indian Malaysian employment rate in full-time jobs and not only those hired on a contract basis."

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