

RM35mil for Indians 'news to me', says Waytha
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Former deputy minister P Waythamoorthy said the RM35 million allocated to resolve the Taman Permata flats issue in Dengkil is “news” to him, as this was never cropped up in his discussions with the prime minister on the matter.

While welcoming the allocation he, however, stressed that this is only one of many issues that his NGO, Persatuan Hindraf Malaysia, sought to resolve.

“Dengkil is not the only thing. There is also the Bukit Jalil estate and so many estates left in the country, where people need to be resettled properly and houses built for them properly.

“Settling one problem alone will not settle the entire Indian community’s problems. We have a very long list, because we have been overlooked for over 50 years,” he told a press conference today.

He was asked to comment on Housing and Local Government Minister Abdul Rahman Dahlan’s statement yesterday, defending Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Abdul Rahman (*left*) said that Najib gave his ministry RM35 million to resolve the issue after Waythamoorthy had urged the prime minister to take action, so it is not true that Najib had not been paying heed to Indian issues.

The Taman Permata flat residents were originally estate workers, but temporarily resettled there to make way for the construction of Putrajaya, pending new low-cost terrace houses for them.

Tents as homes for months

The houses never materialised and when cracks appeared in the flats, they were forced to treat tents as homes for months.

The residents said in a Facebook post last month that they had received word from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government that the federal government will build new houses for them.

PHM believes that there are some 800,000 displaced estate workers nationwide without proper access to jobs and infrastructure, when the estates they had worked in - sometimes for generations - vanished to make way for development.

Among others, Waythamoorthy had said a week after being sworn in as senator last year, that he had asked Najib to allocate him a budget for the remainder of the year and the following year, to set up a new unit under Prime Minister’s Department to implement Hindraf’s plans, and an expert steering committee to conduct studies.

This was tabled as part of his proposals of his first 100 days in office.

However, he said he only managed to receive verbal commitments from Najib meeting, after meeting, and little else.

He also gave the prime minister a list of 19 issues that needed to be urgently addressed namely a number of Tamil schools, Indian temples and settlements, deaths in custody, unrecognised doctors, forced conversions, and religious disputes.

Between him and his two secretaries, he was only able to resolve a small number of the 709 complaints made to him, he said.

“By the end of October, I realised nothing was moving. I did not see political will on the part of the prime minister. I could only hear his commitments, but beyond that I could not see anything moving.

“Not with him, not with the other ministers, not with other ministries and government agencies,” he said.

He then wrote a letter to the prime minister, giving him a month to come up with a plan to fulfil his promises failing which he would resign. He then went on unpaid leave from November onwards.

On the 3rd week of November, he was called to a meeting with Najib.

Since there was no allocation for Waythamoorthy’s unit under the Prime Minister’s Department under the 2014 Budget, he said, Najib promised to set aside RM750 million from his own budget and money from unused allocations in other ministries.

Again there was no further progress.

“As I have said earlier, the civil servants were not cooperative and I had no choice. I had to report to the PHM Central Executive Committee (CEC) and I told them I do not have any more confidence that will be able to perform as a deputy minister with the purpose of delivering on the promises made to the Indian community,” he said.

Yes boss culture made vivid

After this, he said, the CEC arrived at the unanimous decision that PHM should leave the government.

When asked to comment on criticisms from his former colleagues that he was not a ‘team player’, Waythamoorthy said he did not join the cabinet to be part of a team, but to implement Hindraf’s blueprint.

“I don’t understand what they mean by ‘team player’. I think that they are so used to being in power, so used to seeing Indian ministers who claim to represent the community in the cabinet for a very long period of time.

“So they are used to, ‘Ya, tuan. Boleh, tuan. Jangan takut, tuan. Orang India semua sokong, tuan. (Yes sir. Can, sir. Don’t worry, sir. The Indians are all supportive, sir.)’

“They are so used to that kind of language, but they are not used to our language. Our language is different, our language is ‘human rights’, ‘dignity’, and ‘fulfilling promises’,” he added.

