

## **Not all MPs on board with getting EPF instead of pensions**

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An economist's suggestion to abolish pensions for elected representatives and place them under the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) did not resonate well with some MPs.

This came after former Khazanah Research Institute director Muhammed Abdul Khalid proposed to scrap pension for all MPs and ministers, saying they should be on the same boat as the people.

Speaking to Malaysiakini, Seputeh MP Teresa Kok (DAP) deemed the suggestion unfair to parliamentarians who have served their whole lives as public servants.

Citing Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang's decades of service as MPs, Kok said the duo, among others, should be entitled to receive a pension as they have contributed a lot to nation-building.

"We are also public servants. I have been an MP for 23 years and I have been working full-time as one.

“Compared to many government servants, we work as hard as them.

“Most of us, after we get elected, we work day and night and over the weekends,” she said when contacted by Malaysiakini yesterday.

Malaysiakini contacted 26 parliamentarians from both sides of the political divide but only four agreed to comment on the matter, with only two - Teresa and Perikatan Nasional’s Machang MP Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal - willing to go on record.

### **Why single out politicians?**

Teresa also took a swipe at Muhammed, questioning the latter’s suggestion which came across as an attempt to “single out politicians”.

“Unless you want to propose to abolish the pension scheme for all (civil servants), otherwise why is it only focused on politicians?

“And why EPF? This suggestion needs to be viewed from a different view and more research and discussion must be conducted.”

Another government MP, who spoke on condition of anonymity to Malaysiakini, also shared similar sentiments.

He believed there is no problem with the current pension scheme for MPs, stressing that there is no job security when one becomes an MP.

“The pension doesn’t start right after one is out of MP-ship, but they have to wait until they are 55,” the two-term parliamentarian said.

### **'Hypocritical, populist idea'**

He then slammed Muhammed for being hypocritical to have come up with such ideas, pointing out that Putrajaya’s biggest burden is to give pensions to civil servants.

“However, he (Muhammed) did not address that because touching (matters) on the civil servants’ benefits would not make him popular.

“How much can the country save from placing MPs under the EPF instead of the pension scheme? Why didn’t Muhammed advise the then-prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he was the latter’s economic adviser?” he asked.

“I definitely would not support his populist idea.”

Meanwhile, another MP from the government bloc, who asked to remain anonymous in order to speak more freely, said the matter at hand is a lot more

complex than being a “simple isolated fiscal issue where MPs get too much when they retire”.

The first-term parliamentarian emphasised the pertinence of studies on the intricacies and complexities of public office to be conducted.

“It is not binary. It’s not an issue that can be (tackled by a) one-size-fits-all solution if one wants diversity of representation in our legislatures,” he said.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the political aisle, Machang MP Wan Fayhsal agreed with the proposal made by Muhammed.

However, he said the matter should be debated in the Parliament before a decision is made.

“I don’t deny that Muhammed’s idea is good, but not all MPs are rich.

“Many of them were teachers before this, so they have left their original occupations.

“This (decision to be made) needs a collective (agreement) from other MPs,” the PN Youth chief said.

## **Politicians get 'tiered' pensions**

As for Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman, the Muar MP expressed strong support for the abolishment of the pension scheme for politicians.

In a post on X, previously known as Twitter, Syed Saddiq claimed that politicians are receiving pensions that are a “few folds” more than civil servants who have served for decades.

“Politicians take office and immediately get a lifetime pension.

“The pensions (that politicians receive) are ‘tiered’. Ministers, MPs, state representatives, and all sorts of positions.

“It is reasonable to put them under the EPF, like ordinary citizens,” the Muda president said.

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