

So you got the pay rise, now do this
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The comments by Hamdan Ibrahim in his letter Increase pay but less corruption please were spot on. In support of his views I would like to add thus:

There has been no genuine and earnest effort to really improve the level of competency and integrity of the government's administrative machinery and those who have been entrusted to man them. Indeed this has been one of the major factors that has been a hindrance to ensuring the nation achieving its visions and missions.

Thus far, Pak Lah had been making too much promises and giving too many public sermons. Instead of going for an all-out war against corruption and inefficiencies, he had only been treading the line of least resistance for his own continued survival. In the process, he had earned for himself the image of an ineffective leader.

Be that as it may, and if the status quo is to remain, my view is that the salary revision is totally unjustified. Now that such a decision has been made, the burden to deliver a commensurate value to justify the substantial increase in the government's operating expenditure to the public rests squarely on Pak Lah and his cabinet members. It is our right and responsibility to demand and to continue harping on this.

We note that in the course of the last five years, the government had set aside substantial amounts of budget allocations to improve delivery services in all major government departments especially those that deal with the public. Whilst there has been incremental improvements of late, the incidents and intensity of corrupt practices have increased. This has been most apparent at municipalities, land offices and departments dealing with licencing and various approvals.

The problem in government machineries is, therefore, not restricted just to the front office but that in most instances, it is more rampant and chronic in the back rooms and high up the organisational ladder. These places appear to be a very safe sanctuary for dinosaurs and monstrous beasts. More often than not, they appear to be in a state of mutual co-existence with their untrustworthy political masters.

Based on the current trends in management practices, the 'incremental improvements' approach is totally obsolete and does not meet our requirements. We must talk about reinventing and re-engineering the government management and administrative machinery and thence migrate to a new management model all together - one that is efficient, transparent and where officers are adequately empowered.

A system that is well-designed that incorporates performance management systems and international best practices that would enable us to be benchmarked as among the best among our peers. It is by maintaining such high standards that we would be a successful nation and would earn the respect and confidence of foreign investors and the international community. We must make sure that not only our phone calls are answered after just three rings and our letters are responded to within two weeks but that there are also clear and simple rules and procedures for us to follow in dealing with all government departments and agencies. We must make sure this pay increase is not just a vote-buying spree.

It has been a known fact that there are too many laws, rules and procedures in all government departments that are not meant to be enforced or have hardly been enforced. These have only served as 'pillars' where all sorts of abuses and inefficiencies hide behind apart from being a very fertile breeding ground for corrupt practices. The government has no excuse but to clean up all these as part of the proposed 're-inventing, re-engineering and remodeling' of government machinery.

Finally, we all must admit that there are only two ways of doing this.

1. Do as what Hong Kong and Singapore have done. Pay civil servants well; spell out the rules of the game loud and clear. Any wrongdoing, just chase them out immediately.

2. Do as what China has done. Probably we can continue with what we have now and give them the salary increase. But hang them high when they are caught flouting the rules especially those involving corruption and abuse of public funds. There need to be at least three of them hanged every three years, otherwise they will forget that there is such a practice.

Alternatively, we can do what Indonesia and some other Asean countries practice. Declare to the world that we are efficient and not corrupt but allow corruption to be unofficially institutionalised, ie, collect and distribute some up and down the hierarchy. Once in a while, appease the local community with an elaborate anti-corruption ceremony, especially during festive seasons and national days.

Let us follow closely what is coming after this apart from the impending general election.

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