

**Pua challenges Khairy to a debate**  
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**Ooi Kelly**

Name the time and place...

These were the words of DAP leader Tony Pua to his fellow Oxford graduate Khairy Jamaluddin after issuing a challenge to him for a public debate on the civil service issue.

Although the duo, in their early 30s, graduated in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) from the same prestigious university, they have ended up on opposite sides of the political fence.

Yesterday, Khairy - who is also Umno Youth deputy chief - lambasted Pua and demanded an apology from him for saying that the civil service had become a 'dumping ground' for unemployed Malay graduates.

At a press conference in Petaling Jaya this morning, Pua, a self-made millionaire, once again ruled out the possibility of tendering an apology. He wanted a debate instead.

"Instead of asking the party and myself for an apology, Khairy should do away with emotive arguments as well as semantics and focus on the issues at hand," he said.

Pua, who is the economic advisor to DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, said the debate could be held at the Kuala Lumpur Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall next Wednesday at 8pm.

Or it could be held at any time or place of Khairy's choosing, he stressed.

"We will make time for him. There is no point in making statements in the press, nitpicking on certain points that I raised based on facts and not focusing on the issues at hand," he added.

Khairy, who is also the son-in-law of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had described Pua's remark as "inconsiderate and insulting."

### **Three issues**

Meanwhile, Pua said the debate should focus on three issues:

1. How to prevent our education system from churning out graduates who are unable to gain employment despite the large number of advertised vacancies in the market.

2. How to improve our civil service delivery system to substantially increase the satisfaction of the people and the successful completion of government projects.

3. How to streamline a bloated civil service, disproportionate to the size of the Malaysian population to reduce tremendous economic burden of the government.

Pua also claimed that his earlier statement had been misconstrued by the media.

### Civil service - population ratios in other Asian countries

Country	Civil service	Population	Ratio
Malaysia	1,142,783	26,512,500	4.68%
Japan	4,077,814	126,170,000	3.23%
Taiwan	613,043	22,770,000	2.69%
Thailand	1,296,688	62,833,000	2.06%
Korea	868,753	47,008,000	1.85%
Philippines	1,445,493	79,999,000	1.81%
Indonesia	3,928,658	219,883,000	1.79%

\* Japan (data recorded in 1999); Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand (2000); Taiwan and Malaysia (2005)

Source: Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and  
Development (OECD)

Azlan Zamhari /  
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He acknowledged saying that the civil service had become a 'dumping ground' for unemployed Malay graduates but denied stating that the civil service was totally made up of unemployed Malays.

"I have no intention to make such claims," he stressed.

He claimed that the racial issue came into the picture because of the harsh response from several quarters to his statement.

Pua's remarks had also drawn flak from Cuepacs president Omar Osman who accused the DAP leader of "belittling the Malays."

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