

Graduate teachers now can be active in politics

Malaysiakini.com

July 27, 2010

Beginning Aug 1, graduate education service officers (teachers) on grades DG41 to DG48 will be permitted to engage in politics, Chief Secretary to the Government Mohd Sidek Hassan announced today.

NONEHe said the move was based on the fact that teachers, at one time, played an important role as community leaders in the country's political scenario.

"The time has come for them to be allowed to be active again in politics," Sidek (right) said in a statement.

For this purpose, he said, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin had consented to an amendment to Regulation 21 of the Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Regulations 1993.

Action is being taken to gazette the amendment to the regulation, he added.

Regulation 21(2) now states that only officers in the Support Group can contest or hold any position or be appointed to any post in any political party, on the condition that they obtain prior written approval from the director-general of the Public Service Department or the secretary-general of the relevant ministry.

Under the amended regulation, education officers, other than principals or headmasters and officers holding any administrative post in any government agency, have to obtain a prior written approval from the secretary-general of the Education Ministry.

"The secretary-general of the Education Ministry cannot delegate his authority to give the written approval to anyone, and any decision of the secretary-general of the Education Ministry is final," said Mohd Sidek.

He said tight conditions would be imposed to ensure that the primary duties and focus of the group, which was to educate children, were not affected by their involvement in politics.

education school books 280804 teacher and studentHe said those allowed to be involved in politics must adhere fully to the Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Regulations 1993.

In response to the move, the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) said allowing graduate teachers to engage in politics should not be at the expense of schoolchildren's education.

Its general secretary Lok Yim Pheng said the union supported the move, but certain things must be adhered to.

"Priority should be given to the children's education...politics should come second."

Lok said with the move, teachers' voice on issues would be heard more at the political level and they should be given the opportunity to play a constructive role in politics.

In Shah Alam, Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim said although this group of teachers would be allowed to engage in politics, they should not spend too much time on it.

He said the reason for not allowing government officers including this group of teachers to engage in politics previously was for them to be impartial in their views and to avoid a conflict of interest.

Abdul Khalid said this after speaking on the 2011 Budget Dialogue Council for Selangor today.

Selangor DAP chairman Ean Yong Hian Wah, however, felt that teachers, a special professional group, should not be involved in politics.

"It is the job of civil servants to help us politicians...not that they also get involved directly in politics," said Yong, who is also a state executive council member.

- Bernama

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