

**Resign, Hindu Endowments Board members told**  
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**Athi Veerangan**

All 13 commissioners of the Penang Hindu Endowments Board should resign gracefully to allow the newly elected DAP-led state government to reorganise its composition and manage the endowments to fulfill the aspiration of local Hindus, said a non-governmental organisation. MCPX

Since it was inevitable that the new state government would wield the axe on all the commissioners, the Penang-based United Hindu Religious Council said it would be honourable for them to resign en bloc.

endowment board story 180308 Council president G Mugunthan (right), who was a fierce critic of the board during the MIC-Gerakan era, took a swipe at the commissioners for clinging on to their positions despite their political masters being ousted in the March 8 polls.

"Although technically the commissioners are not political appointees, nonetheless it is common knowledge that they were appointed based on political patronage of the past masters.

"It would be a gentlemanly act to step aside and allow a smooth transition of power. The writing is on the wall and the commissioners should not pretend not to read it," he said.

### **Chairperson resigns**

It is learnt that board chairperson and MIC state deputy chairperson P K Subbaiyah, who was defeated in the Bagan Dalam state seat, resigned from his post yesterday.

He is expected to officially hand over his duties to present deputy chairperson V Sithambaran early next month.

Another three commissioners are also expected to follow suit over the next few days.

Mugunthan called on the commissioners to emulate Subbaiyah and the other resignation-bound commissioners, who had shown maturity and self-respect in making an honourable decision.

"At least they can now walk with dignity and integrity as they have accepted the people's verdict," he said.

Technically the state government, acting on the advice of the chief minister, appoints the board's commissioners.

However, although the board is not a political entity, but rather a statutory body, the state ruling political party has always structured its composition.

In the previous state government, MIC president S Samy Vellu and Gerakan's acting president and former chief minister Dr Koh Tsu Koon influenced the composition of

commissioners.

Governed by a parliamentary statute - the Hindu Endowments Ordinance 1906 - the board comes under the direct purview of the state government.

Since the Penang DAP, along with its allies PKR and PAS, have stormed into power, wiping out Gerakan - the state ruling party of 39 years, MIC and MCA, it's a foregone conclusion that the party would be take charge of the board.

The tenure of existing commissioners, who are appointed on a yearly basis, would expire this December.

"But why wait till then?" asked Mugunthan.

The board was created during the colonial days to safeguard and develop RM100 million worth of Hindu endowments registered under five Hindu temples in the state.

Indians in Penang DAP plan to resurrect the board, which is unpopular among local Hindus, into a viable and vibrant vehicle to enrich, expand and develop the endowments to benefit Penang Hindus.

### **'War' in the making**

It's learnt that the new ruling party has decided to appoint A Thanasekaran, who edged out Subbaiyah in Bagan Dalam, to succeed the latter as the board chairperson.

Several other names including Deputy Chief Minister Prof P Ramasamy, Seri Delima state assemblyperson RS Nethaji Rayer and social activist A Krishnan have been lined up for commissioner appointments.

However, Thanasekaran and company may not find it smooth sailing as they are expected to have a face off with several hostile commissioners.

Led by a senior commissioner, these commissioners are adamant on not quitting.

The senior commissioner, who is a close aide of Koh and Subbaiyah, has apparently influenced several others to prepare themselves for a 'war' with the incoming commissioners to take control of the board.

Although such unwarranted power tussle would be harmful to the board and local Hindu community, the senior commissioner is bent on clinging on to his position.

Several remaining commissioners are however convinced that they have to eventually make way for the newcomers to manage the board.

A commissioner, who is fed up with the politicking, blamed the senior commissioner's arrogant attitude as the main reason behind the local Hindu public disdain and scorn towards the board.

"The board would be a better place to work without this commissioner," said the insider.

Instructed by his political master, the senior commissioner was instrumental behind the

board's actions beyond its judicial powers in recent years such as being involved in organising festivals, controlling tanneer panthals (refreshment sheds) and using the police to intimidate panthal operators and devotees.

Mugunthan said it was a shame the senior commissioner and his comrades-in-arm in the board failed to heed the public wish to just change it.

"They are overstaying their welcome. Perhaps it's time for DAP Indians to fire several rockets to rock the commissioners and instill common sense into them," he said.

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