

MPs with exco posts : a case of political greed?

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Can members of parliament exercise their duties as expected of them when they are also members of state cabinets? MCPX

After the March 8 polls, five states fell to the opposition where a considerable number of candidates stood and won at both state and Parliament levels.

Presently seven members of parliament from Penang, Perak and Selangor are either state executive councillors or heads of their respective state governments.

Academic Dr Kua Kia Song believes that such elected representatives are likely to prioritise their state duties while relegating their responsibilities in Parliament.

"In the old days, contesting for both state and Parliament was sort of an insurance policy - if they don't get into Parliament, they still have a chance to get elected into the state legislative assembly," explains Kua, who is a former MP from the DAP.

Former Kelana Jaya MP Loh Seng Kok believes that such a trend will produce MPs who cannot dedicate themselves fully to their duties in Parliament.

"If you're both a state exco and MP, definitely you cannot fully concentrate on everything. As an MP, you have to attend committee meetings, briefings and other matters.

"If such meetings clash with state exco duties or state assembly sittings, how do you divide your time?" asked Loh, who has the distinction of having a full attendance record in Parliament during the 11th session of Parliament.

Resign as MP

Kua believes that voters did not fathom such an outcome when they cast their ballots. However, he believes that the candidates themselves should also be responsible for the present scenario.

MPs in state cabinets 070408 "It's not just a case of voters being shortchanged. This is also a greedy mentality of politicians who prioritise their careers before their constituents," he said.

In the case of DAP for example, Kua pointed out that the party had enough qualified state assemblypersons to fill state government posts and need not have appointed those who are also MPs.

Both Kua and Loh agreed when asked if an MP should resign and concentrate on their state affairs because they are still unfamiliar with the running of a state government.

Seputeh MP and Kinrara state assemblyperson Teresa Kok however defended her appointment as a state executive council member in Selangor.

While she admits that she would have less time for parliamentary committees and that she might even miss a few sittings, she would be counting on her fellow opposition parliamentarians on certain duties.

"There is bound to be clashes of dates. But these dates are few. I should be in Parliament most of the time and would be coordinating with other MPs when I cannot be present," she told a press conference today.

MP-Adun synergy

Kok said that unlike before, there are a lot of opposition MPs who can take part in the various parliamentary select committees.

At a micro-level, Kok said that she has a total of six full-time staff and nearly a dozen volunteers stationed at her two service centres located in Kuchai Lama and Kinrara.

teresa seputeh team 050408 "I'm not here everyday, but I know what is happening because I'm in constant contact with the staff and volunteers," she said, adding that she would try her best to meet her constituents during the weekends.

"Some of the constituents are worried that I cannot serve them. However, I must stress that our main job as elected representatives is to look at legislative issues and reforming the state government," she said.

She added that her investment, industry and trade portfolio in the Selangor government had also widen her eyes on the many problems faced by the business community.

"With the feedback I get on from them, I raise issues faced by them in Parliament because I've been exposed to more issues as a state exco," she added.

Her press conference today was meant to introduce her staff and volunteers to the press. It was held separately at her Kinrara and Seputeh service centre.