

New Selangor exco Halimah aims to promote holistic health
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As a doctor, it is not surprising to hear that Selangor education, higher education and moral character development committee chairperson Dr Halimah Ali intends to focus on the physical, mental and social well-being of the people in the state. MCPX

"Research has shown that most people only use one percent of the brain. So, I want the people of Selangor to use more of their brain cells," said Halimah, who is one of three PAS leaders in the state cabinet.

Malaysiakini recently spoke to the Selat Kelang state representatives and the vice-president of Yayasan Amal Malaysia and asked her plans for her portfolio.

Tell us more about your portfolio

I hold the education, higher education and moral character development, so they are basically inter-related.

For this portfolio, I'm going to introduce a model - 'SPIES' (S - Spiritual, P-Physical, I-Intelligent, E-Emotion, S-Social). We are going to develop the moral character based on the five basic elements.

exco interview 170408 halimah ali
On the spiritual aspect, we want to promote spiritual intelligence. The person must have an inner voice - should I do good or bad things for myself and also to other people. If a person is spiritually equipped, issues like corruption and crime can be prevented.

Second one is physical. We don't want intelligent people in an unhealthy state. As you can see, fast food is now popular among the Selangor populace. We are looking for prevention.

We As far as health is concerned, we want to educate the public to be physically equipped starting from the young. If you're not physically fit, you are not going to be productive. Then there is intelligence. We want the population to be mentally well developed. Research has shown that most people only use one percent of the brain.

E is for emotional. We do not want intelligent and healthy people to have uncontrollable emotion. There are cases where students, unhappy with their exams results, resort to suicide. They are not emotionally equipped and sadly, they cannot be productive and be an asset to society.

The last one is social. You see the many fights in public places in Selangor. This is because people do not know how to interact with each other or take care of each other's feeling. So, socially, we should be able to inter relate to other people, then you can be socially stable and not become a threat to society.

These are the five things we want to equip and inculcate in the people of Selangor.

How are you going to implement them?

For example, there are so many pre-schools, both public and private, in Selangor. So I came up with the idea to have pre-school covenant councils. We'll start with very basic elements in the development of a holistic person and that should start from the pre-school level. We must teach school kids good values. Let them develop with sound values of life when they are still young.

For moral character development, we will instill these values through campaigns among community leaders, parents, teachers etc. My portfolio encompasses all spectrums of society in fact.

We'll achieve this slowly. For example, a corporate leader who has gout. If you are sick, you have to make efforts to change your habit. You have to do a little bit of exercise.

Emotionally, for example, if a boss is angry with his staff all the time, how do we change it? They can start by attending basic courses - how do you control your emotions, how do you respect people. Just because you are a boss you can't learn to respect people under you?

We are going to organise big campaigns on these things. Everyone must improve themselves, day by day, little by little.

I'm also going to start a reading campaign with the Selangor Public Library Corporation, and I've already made my vision clear. I want to make sure the culture of reading and culture of knowledge to be a culture in Selangor. We have to read.

We need a lot of discussions, seminars, courses and workshops that will involve everybody. But we want it to be practical, we want to see the results. We don't want to start something new but be realistic.

Also, we want to have more social interactions. The gap between the rich and the poor, the elderly and the youngsters. We are going to promote interaction, understanding, love and respect each other. We are going through the preschools, the universities, departments including the private sectors.

What kind of challenges are you facing right now?

I'm trying to get the cooperation from the Federal government and the Ministry of Education. There have been instructions from the education minister that we (Pakatan state representatives) are not allowed to visit schools and teachers are not allowed to work with us.

Our vision is we want our students to shine, to be the top scorers, the best (exams) results etc. If we can't work with the Federal government, it will be hard for us to achieve this. We can use other means of course, but it's not going to be as effective. Hopefully, we can go directly to the schools and deal with the teachers.

Other problems?

Worst crime rates, highest number of school drop-outs, social problems like lepak, Mat Rempit including graduates - all these are major problems in Selangor.

This tells me that these people are the products of education system which they had undergone for 15, 16, 20 years. Some of the graduates, drop-outs became the role models of this sad situation in Selangor.

I mean, Altantuya (Shaaribu) was killed in Selangor, Nurin and Sharlinie cases are also in Selangor. And that's the thing I want to stop. I mean, at least minimize, to be realistic.

Lepak, truants, juvenile delinquencies, teenage pregnancies among school students are also current problems.

At the moment, what I'm looking at is the secondary prevention, things are already happening, for example the illegal motor races (rempit), what do we do with this? What I'm going to do is, to prevent others from falling into the same category.

Right now, as far as I'm concerned, we want the scenario to be different from what it is right now. We have to be prospective.

What is the current status of Selangor's education facilities?

We have many public and private universities in Selangor. Some of the best schools are also in Selangor. They are well equipped because Selangor is undergoing very rapid urbanization. And Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a common thing in Selangor.

Therequite a lot of facilities and one of the visions of the Selangor government is to make Selangor the hub of education, which is going to be world class standard. That's why I'm hoping that the Federal government will help us.

Now there are four women in the Selangor Exco. Any comment?

Naturally, we are pleased with it. It's a coincidence actually according to Selangor Menteri Besar, Khalid Ibrahim's words himself. He chose us (the four women) not because of our gender but because of our qualification and performance.

So here in Selangor, we have more than what has been demanded internationally, we have 40% women in decision making position compared to the 30 % demanded.

Finally, what's your personal view on the proposed modern pig-farming project since Selangor Muslims are making an issue out of it?

My personal view is that it's a 'non issue'. I mean, it's a Malay issue, not an Islamic issue.

It's just a centralisation of pig farming in Selangor, a kind of a good way of farming pigs in a centralized manner, which is taking into consideration about problems of environmental, pollution and things like that.

And the Malay Muslims should be able to consume this, should be able to celebrate actually. Because the previous problem such as the environmental issues will be solved. For examples, the pig's waste will not be allowed to be thrown out of the centralized pig farm.

As a Malay Muslim, they should know what is halal and haram. We cannot say wrong on what is right. The non-Muslim are allowed to eat pork, they have the right to farm pigs, so we can't go emotional about it. We have to show that Islam is a blessing for everyone, for the Muslims and the non-Muslims. The issue was politicised, that's all.

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