

Kayveas Calls For Transformation Of Local Government To Benefit People

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 20 (Bernama) -- People's Progressive Party (PPP) president Datuk M. Kayveas says the next wave of government transformation should focus on improving the operational efficiency of local government to see that it fulfills the aspirations of the people.

The vocal politician who does not mince his words is convinced that the inefficiency of local government and abuses by the corrupt among its employees has given the Barisan Nasional (BN) government a bad name.

In an interview with Bernama, Kayveas said the fact that the BN lost 10 seats in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur in the 2008 General Election had a lot to do with the bad treatment that the people got from the local government authorities, especially from officers who throw their weight around and think that they are above the law.

"The term local government gives a bad impression on the ruling government (at the federal level) because when the people think about the government, even at the local government level, they will think of the Barisan Nasional government starting from the prime minister, that's my view.

"When they see all these abuses and bad treatment from the local authorities, they will think that the BN is powerless. As such, we must really do something. I know I am vocal but I speak the truth. They can sue me but I know what I am talking about," said Kayveas, who is still bristling from the high-handed treatment he got from enforcement officers of a local authority when he was a squatter in Kampung Pandan more than 30 years ago.

He recalled that when he finished his secondary education, he too wanted to be part of the Green Book Plan introduced by then prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, who encouraged people to grow vegetables at home.

So he chose to cultivate mushrooms and built a shed in front of his house but this was soon demolished by enforcement officers who claimed that it was an illegal structure.

"How do you feel when you want to do something which the government has encouraged you to do and yet some people from the government come along to destroy your work? You will feel very angry towards the government," said Kayveas, who then went on to qualify as a lawyer in London.

The PPP chief said nothing had changed since then as local authorities were still lording over the people, especially with delays in approving applications for various activities, including low-cost houses.

"When the people don't benefit from the system and are frustrated, they will punish the Barisan Nasional for being weak," said Kayveas, who knew the ins and outs of local government authorities as he was once a deputy minister of housing and local government.

Kayveas said he has informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak of this "political deficit" and that the time has come for the government to amend the Local Government Act 1976 to benefit the people.

Given that local government is a "closed service" entity, he claimed that offenders who are not sacked are merely transferred to other units or departments within the same local government authority.

Kayveas said he hoped that Najib would look into the present shortcomings so that local government authorities would not become a liability to the ruling government.

"Everyone is subject to the authority of the local government. Even if you are at home or the moment you step out of your house, you are subject to the by-laws of the local authorities.

"If you want to renovate your house, operate a restaurant or sell liquor, or set up a stall to sell 'cendol' or 'char koay teow' or extend the working hours of your construction activity, you have to get approval from the local authorities.

"You will be in big trouble if you don't have a licence to operate or have approval for your activities. Why do local government authorities want to make it so difficult for the people if they have already complied with the provisions of the by-laws?" he asked.

Kayveas said times have changed and local government authorities must be transformed to rise to the challenge of Vision 2020 to facilitate the people and not frustrate them.

He felt that the present structure of local government was unworkable, especially with the autonomy that it has, and that it is time to crack the whip before it does more damage to the government's reputation.

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