

No allegiance owed to BN, Pakatan tells civil servants
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, June 30 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders reminded the country's 1.4 million civil servants today that they should "be loyal to the country, the King and the Federal Constitution and not to the ruling party," amid recent concerns about the lack of impartiality among senior government officials.

"They (civil servants) must remember that the government of the day can change. These political parties that form the government of the day, they can come and go.

"So if these parties that rule, if they go into the wilderness, do you follow them? No. You still remain a civil servant and your loyalty is to serve the public professionally," DAP national deputy chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw told *The Malaysian Insider*.

Newly-appointed Chief Secretary to the Government Datuk Seri Ali Hamsa had recently raised eyebrows when he told his new charges that they "should know better" than to believe the "empty promises" made by the opposition.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said Ali had clearly got off to a "bad start" with his statement.

"That was out of line. This is the first time that a KSN (Chief Secretary) has done that. He got off to a bad start here," he told *The Malaysian Insider*.

The DAP secretary-general, who also sits as a lawmaker in Parliament, reminded Ali that as the country's top civil servant, he should be particularly respectful of the Federal Constitution.

"And the opposition, which he is telling his charges not to believe in, is entitled to gain the same respect (as the ruling party). We are the loyal opposition to His Majesty's government," Lim pointed out.

The Bagan MP said politics must be kept out of the civil service, and disagreed with Ali's assertion that the loyalty of public servants lies with the ruling party of the day.

"We must be loyal to the country, the Federal Constitution and the King. We are not to be loyal to the ruling party. At the same time, they cannot tread into politics," he said.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar concurred with Lim, adding that "loyalty to the nation" should never be equated as "loyalty to Umno and BN".

She acknowledged that public servants are duty bound to serve the government of the day, as per the General Orders they follow, but she reminded that their duty was also to "serve professionally".

"They are not to be made tools and servants of the current government... especially when it does not have their interest at heart," she told *The Malaysian Insider*.

"They must implement policies cleanly, effectively and with accountability and transparency — that is what the civil service should be," Dr Tan agreed.

The 1.4-million-strong public sector has been a traditional vote bank for BN but the controversy over a new pay scheme and attacks on the ruling parties by PR over bread-and-butter issues may offer the federal opposition a glimmer of hope in the coming polls.

But recent days have seen top government officials go on an apparent overdrive to protect the BN government they serve.

Apart from Ali's message to the civil service, Foreign Ministry undersecretary Ahmad Rozian Abdul Ghani recently attacked a Canadian newspaper for describing Najib as a "false democrat," and insisted that the prime minister had "an impressive track record by anyone's standards".

"While the prime minister takes nothing for granted, he hopes he will be given a mandate to continue Malaysia's transformation," the diplomat added, appearing to campaign for the country's sixth prime minister who is due to call for polls within months.

A director at Putrajaya's efficiency unit, Pemandu, also made a public attack on PR on Wednesday for not improving the states it governs and focusing on sniping and criticising the federal government's efforts.

"All oppos do is snipe & critic wot is being done but not focused on improving their states! Wot hv they done??" communications director Alex Iskandar Liew said on his public account on micro-blogging site Twitter, copying @barisannasional and @NRC11, a fan club dedicated to the prime minister.

But despite this, Lim believed these subtle messages infiltrating into the civil service may be falling on deaf ears.

"I don't think we should underestimate the intelligence of our civil servants," he told *The Malaysian Insider*.

"They may be compelled and forced to carry out their duties because they are instructed to do so. But once they retire, you see many of them joining the opposition," he pointed out.

Lim pointed out that it is not easy for civil servants to go against an order they have received from above if they felt it was wrong.

"It is also not easy for them to just resign. It affects their rice bowls, after all," he said.

But this, he added, does not mean that civil servants will necessarily cast their votes for BN when stand before the ballot boxes

"Do not underestimate their intelligence," he repeated.

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