

Don't view MPs as Santa Claus, says PSM's Jeyakumar

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He claims BN supporters receive fruit baskets and other goodies during an election and they are afraid to be seen with him in case they miss out on the handouts.

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians should not expect their MPs to be Santa Claus and still demand that they be free of corruption, said Parti Sosialis Malaysia's (PSM) lone parliamentarian Dr Michael Jeyakumar.

"If you are clean, you become cash-strapped and that is something the public has to accept.

"We have to educate our public to see what they want from their politicians as they are selling their rights for money. Once you have done that, there is no turning back.

"Fight for better policies, not handouts," the Sungai Siput MP said here today at a media conference where he made his annual declaration of his assets.

Since 2008, when PSM won its first parliamentary seat, the party's representatives holding public office had declared their assets regularly.

Jeyakumar acknowledged that money bought votes in Malaysia.

He claimed the poorest people in his constituency in Perak, who supported Barisan National (BN), would receive fruit baskets and other goodies during an election.

"They are afraid to get too close to me as it may cause them to miss out on the handouts," he added.

To curb this culture of money politics, Jeyakumar suggested that the government provide funding to all parties in their constituencies and not restrict such funds to BN parties alone.

In his assets' declaration, Jeyakumar revealed his monthly salary and allowances as MP amounted to RM25,500, out of which he spent about RM20,000 on his political activities.

He also received a pension of almost RM2,400 a month as a former government medical officer but made a loss of RM1,000 a month at the Kinta Medical Centre, which he owns.

Donations from his friends, book sales and a PSM dinner in Ipoh raised more than RM35,000.

He counted a house worth about RM150,000 and five cars valued at about RM30,000 as his other assets.

Besides that, he has RM54,000 in savings, shares worth almost RM48,000 and a cash bonus value from insurance policies of about RM10,800.

“A Kancil was given to me by my grandmother and a Toyota Vios was a present from my father-in-law,” he said.

As for expenditure, he said they totalled RM285,236 a year, with the largest item going to pay the salaries, Employees Provident Fund (EPF) allowances and insurance premiums of three full-time staff, amounting to RM88,874.

“I am underpaying them as they could probably earn more working elsewhere. Luckily, they are all party members,” he said.

Jeyakumar joked that since his MP's salary and allowances were increased in 2015, he no longer needed to beg his friends for extra funding for his political work.

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