

IEM's response to the recent announcement on the setting up of a Special Review Commission on Civil Service Transformation

LET THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST SERVE THE NATION!

Provide Engineers and Other Professionals a Pathway to the Top Posts of the Public Service

THE recent announcement by the Prime Minister of Malaysia regarding the setting up of a Special Review Commission on Civil Service Transformation headed by former Chief Justice Tun Zaki Tun Azmi is indeed a welcoming news to engineers currently serving in the Public Sector. The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM), as the national professional body representing the interests of engineers in the country, applauds this initiative and fully supports its implementation.

IEM agrees that the focal points, namely the remuneration and the type of civil service required are indeed the two fundamental elements that will have an immediate impact on civil servants at large even though there may be other elements that may require scrutiny too. These two elements affect motivation and translate directly into a more effective and efficient work force.

In addressing the issues above, IEM hopes that engineers in the Public Sector will be given due consideration in their promotion scheme. At present, serving professionals in the public service have yet to have a good service scheme that is commensurate with their ability and contribution. In fact, the service scheme for professionals is often perceived to be an after-thought, rather than a plan conceived with the special capability and characteristics of professionals in mind. Perhaps, now with the study by the Commission, it is hoped that engineers and other professionals will be recognised as being capable of not only contributing directly to development and nation building, but could also serve as leaders and decision makers at the top levels of the civil service.

Engineers in the Public Sector have often been demotivated by the existing service schemes that offer them less than equal terms and opportunities as compared to their peers in the Administrative and Diplomatic Service. The IEM is very keen to seeing engineers not only be provided with equal prospects, but also with a pathway that can enable them to take on the top posts in the Public Sector. They should not be restricted and limited by what is available only in engineering departments such as the Public Works Department (JKR), the Drainage and Irrigation Department (JPS) and the like. Excluding engineers and other professionals from the top posts is tantamount to denying the nation of the best to lead.

The same restriction in the service scheme for professionals is evident across all sectors of the Public Sector. Engineers pursuing a career in the Armed Forces for example, usually have an early exit, and the highest rank they can rise to is that

of a Major General or Rear Admiral, or its equivalent. It is rare for an engineer to rise to the rank of a Lieutenant General or Vice Admiral, or higher. One must realise that an engineer in the Armed Forces is exposed to the same risk when placed in perilous zone as a peer fellow combatant of equivalent or higher rank.

As Engineers have technical expertise and know-how, the investment in grooming them for specialised technical functions should not be considered a loss to the engineering departments, but rather as a gain to the Public Sector overall. They bring with them, the same discipline, methodology and analytical approaches that have made them successful as engineers, which can also continue to be an asset in helping them in the top posts in the Public Sector.

It is the disparity in remuneration packages and opportunities in career progression between the Professional services as compared to those in the Administrative and Diplomatic service that causes a loss in motivation of an engineer and the loss of a potential leader in the Public Sector. Providing professionals with the pathway to reach the top will motivate the best amongst the professionals, including engineers, with refreshing and exciting job prospects that will drive them to go beyond traditional boundaries and into a brave new world. We are confident that professionals when given the opportunity to reach the top echelon of the civil service will bring with them a different perspective that will transform the nation and take us to greater heights.

IEM, the largest membership-based professional engineering organisation in Malaysia, is very keen to be invited to give its views to the Special Review Commission on Public Service Transformation. We would like to play our part in ensuring that not only engineers are accorded their due prospects, but that a pathway must be made available for the best amongst them to move from engineering to the top posts of the Civil Service. It is only right that the engineer's voice too should be heard – quoting from a statement by Cuepac's President, Datuk Omar Osman. ■

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