

Basic economics for politicians and the civil service

Updated 1 hour ago · Published on 30 Nov 2021 8:28AM · 0 Comments



THE Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith describes the industrialised capitalist system upended the mercantilist system. Mercantilism held that wealth was fixed and finite and that the only way to prosper was to hoard gold and tariff products from abroad.

On the other hand, Islamic economics is a complete system that defines the rules of engagement for social and economic behavior of individuals. Among the principles are: equity & justice, prohibition of risk and uncertainty due to lack of proper information or deliberately withholding relevant information, sanctity of promises and trust, productive investment and prohibits wealth accumulation through illegal means, such as corruption in the public and private sectors.

Of late, we have heard Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs), opposing recommendation by the World Bank for the government to raise retirement age and instead, urged the government to raise the minimum wage for all working Malaysians in order to improve their livelihood. There is also a penchant for appointing advisors to the prime minister and special envoys when Cuepacs said, "Malaysia is facing financial constraints as it has to spend more to assist its people who are badly affected by the pandemic and many Malaysians are unemployed and underemployed".

Appointments of politicians into posts of special envoys and special advisors to the prime minister are not a waste of resources and are significant roles, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Special envoys with ministerial status are often accorded a team consisting between four to eight personnel. They are not appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong but are direct appointees.



As for advisers, there are advisers for health, religion as well as law and human rights. Putting aside issues of trust or incompetence in the respective ministries, they cost RM50,000 each per month.

More often, these appointees are self-sufficient with their handsome pensions and what are the added values? Are they experts in the relevant fields and how often, if there are any advice given, being implemented?

We don't want subjective statements on their roles but more objectivity. We need information like a cost-benefit analysis on these appointments just like a requirement for return-on-investment in the private sector. It must be a productive investment.

Are these appointments urgent and important that it needs to be done or dealt with first when we have financial constraints? If there is priority, there will be harmony.

Being wasteful is an act that is abhorred in Islam, as attested in verses 26 and 27 of Surah al-Isra' in the Quran.

Islam also has made the circulation of wealth between all citizens an obligation and forbade the restriction of such circulation to a certain group of people to the exclusion of others (Quran 59:7).

Possibly, Jakim or the adviser for religion can offer some advice to the relevant parties.

Meanwhile, I can understand where Cuepacs is coming from but a little bit of economic knowledge will not only help the government to save in the long term but also empathise with other Malaysians who do not even have a job.

As for the politicians, what say you... – November 30, 2021.

** Saleh Mohammed reads The Malaysian Insight.*

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