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Civil servants leaving the Prime Minister's Department's monthly assembly in May 2018. Experts say the civil service will carry on implementing existing policies until a new government takes power. FILE PIC

Cuepacs: Ministry sec-gens will lead

KUALA LUMPUR: The secretaries-general of ministries will take the lead in the absence of ministers and deputy ministers to ensure that the government functions as usual.

Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) president Adnan Mat said ministries would continue to function without ministers, who were policymakers.

"The ministries will now be headed by the secretaries-general, who will lead the civil servants. The secretaries-general will carry on implementing existing policies.

"Since there are no ministers and deputy ministers, there will be no new policies drawn up for the moment," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Adnan said there had not been any problem with civil servants following the resignation of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is now caretaker prime minister, as consented to by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Adnan said civil servants were steadfast in discharging their duties for the nation, with the priority now to beat the Covid-19 pandemic and to help the people recover economically.

"Frontliners will remain as they

are in the battle against the pandemic. Those who are working from home and others in the office will work to give the best services to the people.

"Nothing is jeopardised. We have not received complaints of any civil servants who had shirked their responsibility.

"Moreover, this is the third time our government has changed. The first was May 2018, then in March 2020 and it was our third yesterday. We have learnt from our experiences and work will go on," he said.

Echoing Adnan's views was Centre for Public Policy Studies chairman Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, who was a former secretary-general of the Transport Ministry.

Ramon said secretaries-general would carry on leading the ministry with the policies and procedures that had been set, while providing basic services to the people.

"Life goes on as usual. The only big difference is that if there is a need to amend a policy or formulate a new one, there is no minister to lead the obtaining of permission from the government.

"Other than that, there are no major disruptions.

"However, naturally, you cannot run a government on that basis (without ministers) in a democratic world and without elected representatives to chart new ways ahead.

"This cannot last for long as it is not our way of management and not good governance," he added.

Ramon said the minister and deputy ministers' positions ought to be filled as civil servants would want to formulate policies in accordance with the wants and needs of the people.

This would be where politicians go down to the ground to find out the desires of the people or have political campaign manifestos fulfilled.

"There comes a time when new directions must be charted and ministers will either make new policies or amend the old ones in their capacity as policymakers.

"It is the civil servants, who are professionals, working hard behind the scenes in formulating policies.

"They do not have the authority to change policies but play a big role in formulating new policies or amending old ones.

"But their policies will be subject to the approval of the ministers," he said.

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