

22/08/1997

Confused about 'politics' in the Malaysian context

Mohd Hazman Che Ali

I THOUGHT being an engineer was good enough for me to understand the word "politics", but I was wrong. Speeches, comments and rebukes by some political figures in Malaysia have made me totally confused on what is politics.

When the issue of social ills started making everybody nervous, the Government called for concerted efforts by everybody to help tackle the problem. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad even reminded the Opposition not to politicise the issue but rather come up with solutions.

Before that, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, when asked on the presence of Israel's cricket team in Kuala Lumpur, said politics and sports did not mix.

When Gerakan Youth passed the resolution on the exorbitant toll charges of the North-South Expressway, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu was quick to reprimand it and told it not to politicise government projects to gain political mileage.

Meanwhile, Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon raised the issue about the proposed Northern Region International Airport.

So, what is politics after all? Is it not the failure of the educational system, dictated by political system, that has created the social ills? Is it not the political judgments that had allowed the Israel's cricket team to play here?

Is it not the political system that has decided to construct the expressway, hence its toll charges? Is it not the political system that has decided the proposal to build the NRIA?

I tried to find a new definition of politics in the Malaysian scenario but I am scared that some people will say that I am trying to politicise the word. Any efforts to find words to define politics can be considered as trying to politicise the words, so we cannot use those words. Even the very word "politics", to these people, cannot be used to define politics because then we are trying to politicise the word.

At the end of the day, we are left with no words to define politics.