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Adil, but why the insistence on being non-political?

Rose Ismail

THE reformasi group has spoken. After weeks of causing disruptions to public life and insisting upon the reinstatement of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the removal of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the group has finally decided to become a reform movement.

Adil or Social Justice Movement, at a Press conference which initially excluded the local media, will be open to Malaysians from all walks of life, over the age of 18. It is multi-ethnic, non-sectarian and non-partisan.

A rainbow coalition. How intriguing.

But why the insistence on being non-political?

Does this mean we now have another Aliran-type pressure group in the making?

But what is Aliran not doing that Adil has been created to do?

And what is the point of being non-political when the movement's objectives can only be achieved through changes in the political structure and thinking?

Adil claims that it will be firm and unrelenting in its struggle for justice, will not hesitate to expose and oppose authoritarianism and oppression, the abuse of power, corruption, wealth in the hands of a few, and communalism and chauvinism in Malaysian society.

It will also make the public aware of the importance of reforms in various spheres, achieve social justice and do these through peaceful democratic means, ensure every citizen has real and meaningful freedom, that justice is enjoyed by every group, establish legal and judicial institutions that are transparent, and embody integrity, strengthen the Malaysian identity, and create a culture that is progressive and dynamic, reinforce the tradition of goodwill, understanding and co-operation among the communities and ensure that national wealth is evenly distributed.

These objectives are laudable and worth standing up and fighting for. Anyone who loves this country would support them.

But why do it from the sidelines? Why not jump into the fray and thrash out problems from within?

Or, is Adil afraid that it might soil its hands (and lose credibility) when it gets embroiled in the machinations that must take place within any political system?

There is a reason for this. An Adil statement said such a movement cannot be a political party for the simple reason that the demand for justice and reform transcends political party boundaries.

But reformasi began with specific political demands. Anwar and Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail have held themselves up as catalysts for change.

Most of all, they wanted a cleaner, transparent and more efficient Government. No one would quarrel with this.

Many people who have not demonstrated on the streets also want change.

Adil has also extended a special welcome to the young who have been at the forefront of reformasi.

Is this a pacifier of sorts? Surely, the youth who have risked life and limb over several Saturdays fighting for laudable goals would feel cheated by this new development.

All that fire and now such a tepid conclusion. Like reluctant gladiators teetering on the fringes of the arena.

Or, are there pragmatic reasons why Adil has chosen to stay out of the ring?

A political party would have to be governed by votes and this might sway them from their original calling.

A political party might also force them to compete with other opposition parties and this they cannot afford.

Or, are they planning an indirect route to political change?

If this is their agenda, who will they direct their supporters to vote? Pas? DAP?

If they support Pas, they stand to lose non-Muslim support. If they throw their weight behind DAP, they risk losing Malay support.

This means that they must become a direct agent of change. If they really want to serve, they must commit. Clearly.

This is only adil.

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