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Racial extremism a mockery to unity in diversity

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EVERYTIME a political situation or crisis erupts, one can't help but wonder if things would come out differently had someone else had sparked off the controversy.

Take the Vision schools issue for example.

Had MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik been the one who proposed the concept, would the Chinese educationists be more supportive of it?

Probably not, but one can at least expect the issue to be more open to discussion and the Chinese educationists would probably have not resorted to participate directly in the recent Lunas by-election almost as if it was a political party instead of just a guardian of Chinese education legacy.

Similarly, if it had been Dr Ling who had accused the Chinese educationists who opposed the Vision schools as "extremists", would the community as a whole reacted as strongly as it did when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it?

These are thoughts that carry great underlying racial connotations, undoubtedly. But they are also food for thought.

When the Prime Minister accused the Al-Maunah group of being extremists, the Chinese community generally accepted his statement in good faith and shared his fear of the country being overrun by such elements.

If there was any opposition to his remarks about the Al-Maunah being extremists, it came from some segment of the Malay community and they too had always been viewed as fundamentalists (read extremists) in their own right.

To take the issue further, if Dr Mahathir were to say that the Malays should not be too dependent on the privileges accorded to the community, it will be seen as a reminder to the Malays to move forward and to be more competitive.

If, let's say, Dr Ling were to remark such thoughts, chances are the Malays would retaliate and accuse him of being a Chinese chauvinist for questioning what had been stipulated in the Constitution.

Today, when some Malay youth movements start questioning the wisdom of stressing the Bahasa Malaysia at the expense of eroding the standard of English, the move is seen as one of concern about the ability of future generation of Malaysians to participate and compete in the international arena.

If it had come from Suqiu or Dong Jiao Zhong, one can expect the reaction to be quite vicious and loaded with racial invectives.

All these point towards how aware Malaysians are to their racial origin and how much each issue that crops up can turn anyone into a potential racist.

The Vision schools, which remains as a controversial issue that was exploited to the fullest during the Lunas by-election, is one such example.

When it was idealised and promoted, it was supposed to be a collective decision by all the components in Barisan Nasional (BN).

It was seen as an ideal concept to promote racial integration which, most Malaysians will generally accept, has yet to realise its fullest potential.

Since it is a collective decision, it means that Umno, representing the Malay and Bumiputra community, the MCA, and Gerakan to a great degree

representing the Chinese, the MIC representing the Indians, and the numerous Sabah and Sarawak parties representing the diverse communities, are agreed on it.

It further reflects that leaders from these different communities had evaluated the proposal, given it due thought, and are agreeable to the concept being introduced to the people.

As much as the Chinese educationists are bent in opposing the Vision schools, the question that arises is why do the MCA agree to it.

Are the MCA leaders "selling out" the Chinese interest when it agrees to the Vision schools idea?

Or is it that the Chinese educationists are actually the true representative of the Chinese community and not the MCA?

At the same time, is the Vision school truly a concept that is going to hurt the Chinese education system, which they had built since before Merdeka?

Or is it a case of wanting to keep things within the community to let things remain as they are?

There are too many questions left unanswered but at this stage, it seems like the Vision school is definitely something that the BN, especially Umno, should have left as it is.

If the Chinese community wants the education system to remain, then the Umno leaders in Umno should just leave it be and stick to their original struggle, that is to pursue the interests of the Malays.

Forget about all the talks about Bangsa Malaysia (the Malaysian race), which the Vision school could help realise in the long term.

In fact, by choosing to just go back to the basics of the social contract between the different races in the country represented by Umno, MCA and MIC during the Alliance days, each will just concern itself about its community and let nation building take its own course, for better or for worse.

Then, the Chinese will not question the privileges enjoyed by the Malays and the Malays, in turn, will not interfere in the Chinese schools or other cultural legacy they may deem close to their hearts and should be untouched or discussed by others.

Forget about living together, forget about smart partnership between races. Forget too about sharing and tolerance.

The bottom line is to just pursue the well-being of one's own community. If there are those from a particular race facing hardships, the better it is for the other races.

Painful as it may sound or exaggerated as it may seem, the reality is that it is not that far-fetched if things continue as they are.

If anything, the atmosphere seems conducive for the creation of a truly pluralistic society without any direction towards unity.

Alas, then, at every corner a Malaysian turns, the slogan, unity in diversity, will be there to mock them.

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